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UNCLE WILLIAM

BENNETTE LEE

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Uncle William

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Uncle William

The Man Who Was Shif'less

By JENNETTE LEE

WITH FRONTISPIECE

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Published March, 1906

TO

GERALD STANLEY LEE

"Let him sing to me
Who sees the watching of the stars above the day,
Who hears the singing of the sunrise
On its way
Through all the night.
Who outfaces skies, outsings the storms.
* * * * * * *
Let him sing to me
Who is the sky-voice, the thunder-lover,
Who hears above the winds' fast flying shrouds
The drifted darkness, the heavenly strife,
The singing on the sunny sides of all the clouds
Of his own life."

Uncle William

I

"YES, I 'm shif'less. I 'm gen'ally considered shif'less," said William Benslow. He spoke in a tone of satisfaction, and hitched his trousers skilfully into place by their one suspender.

His companion shifted his easel a little, squinting across the harbor at the changing light. There was a mysterious green in the water that he failed to find in his color-box.

William Benslow watched him patiently. "Kind o' ticklish business, ain't it?" he said.

The artist admitted that it was.

"I reckon I would n't ever 'a' done for a painter," said the old man, readjusting his legs. "It 's settin'-work, and that 's good; but you have to keep at it steady-like—keep a-daubin' and a-scrapin' and a-daubin' and a-scrapin', day in and day out. I should n't like it. Sailin' 's more in my line," he added, scanning the horizon. "You have to step lively when you do step, but there 's plenty of off times when you can set and look and the boat just goes skimmin' along all o' herself, with the water and the sky all round you. I 've been thankful a good many times the Lord saw fit to make a sailor of me."

The artist glanced a little quizzically at the tumble-down house on the cliff above them and then at the old boat, with its tattered maroon sail, anchored

below. "There 's not much money in it?" he suggested.

"Money? Dunno 's there is," returned the other. "You don't reely need money if you 're a sailor."

"No, I suppose not—no more than an artist."

"Don't you need money, either?" The old man spoke with cordial interest.

"Well, occasionally—not much. I have to buy canvas now and then, and colors—"

The old man nodded. "Same as me. Canvas costs a little, and color. I dye mine in magenta. You get it cheap in the bulk—"

The artist laughed out. "All right, Uncle William, all right," he said. "You teach me to trust in the Lord and I 'll teach you art. You see that color out there,—deep green like shadowed grass—"

The old man nodded. "I 've seen that a good many times," he said. "Cur'us, ain't it?—just the color of lobsters when you haul 'em."

The young man started. He glanced again at the harbor. "Hum-m!" he said under his breath. He searched in his color-box and mixed a fresh color rapidly on the palette, transferring it swiftly to the canvas. "Ah-h!" he said, again under his breath. It held a note of satisfaction.

Uncle William hitched up his suspender and came leisurely across the sand. He squinted at the canvas and then at the sliding water, rising and falling across the bay. "Putty good," he said approvingly. "You 've got it just about the way it looks—"

"Just about," assented the young man, with quick satisfaction. "Just about. Thank you."

Uncle William nodded. "Cur'us, ain't it? there 's a lot in the way you see a thing."

"There certainly is," said the painter. His brush moved in swift strokes across the canvas. "There certainly is. I 've been studying that water for two hours. I never thought of lobsters." He laughed happily.

Uncle William joined him, chuckling gently. "That 's nateral enough," he said kindly. "You hain't been seein' it every day for sixty year, the way I hev." He looked at it again, lovingly, from his height.

"What 's the good of being an artist if I can't see things that you can't?" demanded the young man, swinging about on his stool.

"Well, what *is* the use? I dunno; do you?" said Uncle William, genially. "I 've thought about that a good many

times, too, when I 've been sailin','' he went on—''how them artists come up here summer after summer makin' picters,—putty poor, most on 'em,—and what 's the use? I can see better ones settin' out there in my boat, any day.—Not but that 's better 'n some,'' he added politely, indicating the half-finished canvas.

The young man laughed. ''Thanks to you,'' he said. ''Come on in and make a chowder. It 's too late to do any more to-day—and that 's enough.'' He glanced with satisfaction at the glowing canvas with its touch of green. He set it carefully to one side and gathered up his tubes and brushes.

Uncle William bent from his height and lifted the easel, knocking it apart and folding it with quick skill.

The artist looked up with a nod of thanks. ''All right,'' he said, ''go ahead.''

Uncle William reached out a friendly hand for the canvas, but the artist drew it back quickly. "No, no," he said. "You 'd rub it off."

"Like enough," returned the old man, placidly. "I gen'ally do get in a muss when there 's fresh paint around. But I don't mind my clothes. They 're ust to it—same as yourn."

The young man laughed anxiously. "I would n't risk it," he said. "Come on."

They turned to the path that zigzagged its way up the cliff, and with bent backs and hinged knees they mounted to the little house perched on its edge.

II

THE old man pushed open the door with a friendly kick. "Go right along in," he said. "I 'll be there 's soon as I 've got an armful of wood."

The artist entered the glowing room. Turkey-red blazed at the windows and decorated the walls. It ran along the line of shelves by the fire and covered the big lounge. One stepped into the light of it with a sudden sense of crude comfort.

The artist set his canvas carefully on a projecting beam and looked about him, smiling. A cat leaped down from the turkey-red lounge and came across,

rubbing against his legs. He bent and stroked her absently.

She arched her back to his hand. Then, moving from him with stately step, she approached the door, looking back at him with calm, imperious gaze.

"All right, Juno," he said. "He 'll be along in a minute. Don't you worry."

She turned her back on him and, seating herself, began to wash her face gravely and slowly.

The door opened with a puff, and she leaped forward, dashing upon the big leg that entered and digging her claws into it in ecstasy of welcome.

Uncle William, over the armful of wood, surveyed her with shrewd eyes. He reached down a long arm and, seizing her by the tail, swung her clear of his path, landing her on the big lounge. With a purr of satisfaction, she settled

herself, kneading her claws in its red softness.

He deposited the wood in the box and stood up. His bluff, kind gaze swept the little room affectionately. He took off the stove-lid and poked together the few coals that glowed beneath. "That 's all right," he said. "She 'll heat up quick." He thrust in some light sticks and pushed forward the kettle. "Now, if you 'll reach into that box behind you and get the potatoes," he said, "I 'll do the rest of the fixin's."

He removed his hat, and taking down a big oil-cloth apron, checked red and black, tied it about his ample waist. He reached up and drew from behind the clock a pair of spectacles in steel bows. He adjusted them to his blue eyes with a little frown. "They 're a terrible bother," he said, squinting through them and readjusting them. "But I

don't dare resk it without. I got hold of the pepper-box last time. Thought it was the salt—same shape. The chowder *was* hot." He chuckled. "I can see a boat a mile off," he said, lifting the basket of clams to the sink, "but a pepper-box two feet 's beyond me." He stood at the sink, rubbing the clams with slow, thoughtful fingers. His big head, outlined against the window, was not unlike the line of sea-coast that stretched below, far as the eye could see, rough and jagged. Tufts of hair framed his shining baldness and tufts of beard embraced the chin, losing themselves in the vast expanse of neckerchief knotted, sailor fashion, about his throat.

Over the clams and the potatoes and the steaming kettles he hovered with a kind of slow patience,—in a smaller man it would have been fussiness,—and when the fragrant chowder was done he

dipped it out with careful hand. The light had lessened, and the little room, in spite of its ruddy glow, was growing dark. Uncle William glanced toward the window. Across the harbor a single star had come out. "Time to set my light," he said. He lighted a ship's lantern and placed it carefully in the window.

The artist watched him with amused eyes. "You waste a lot of oil on the government, Uncle William," he said laughingly. "Why don't you apply for a salary?"

Uncle William smiled genially. "Well, I s'pose the guvernment would say the' wa'n't any reel need for a light here. And I don't s'pose the' is, *myself*—not any *reel* need. But it 's a comfort. The boys like to see it, comin' in at night. They 've sailed by it a good many year now, and I reckon they 'd

miss it. It 's cur'us how you do miss a thing that 's a comfort—more 'n you do one 't you reely *need* sometimes." He lighted the lamp swinging, ship fashion, from a beam above, and surveyed the table. He drew up his chair. "Well, it 's ready," he said, "such as it is."

"That 's all airs, Uncle William," said the young man, drawing up. "You know it 's fit for a king."

"Yes, it 's good," said the old man, beaming on him. "I 've thought a good many times there wa'n't anything in the world that tasted better than chowder—reel good clam chowder." His mouth opened to take in a spoonful, and his ponderous jaws worked slowly. There was nothing gross in the action, but it might have been ambrosia. He had pushed the big spectacles up on his head for comfort, and they made an

iron-gray bridge from tuft to tuft, framing the ruddy face.

"There was a man up here to Arichat one summer," he said, chewing slowly, "that e't my chowder. And he was sort o' possessed to have me go back home with him."

The artist smiled. "Just to make chowder for him?"

The old man nodded. "Sounds cur'us, don't it? But that was what he wanted. He was a big hotel keeper and he sort o' got the idea that if he could have chowder like that it would be a big thing for the hotel. He offered me a good deal o' money if I 'd go with him—said he 'd give me five hunderd a year and keep." The old man chuckled. "I told him I would n't go for a thousand—not for two thousand," he said emphatically. "Why, I don't s'pose there 's money enough in New York to tempt me to live there."

"Have you been there?"

"Yes, I 've been there a good many times. We 've put in for repairs and one thing and another, and I sailed a couple of years between there and Liverpool once. It 's a terrible shet-in place," he said suddenly.

"I believe you 're right," admitted the young man. He had lighted his pipe and was leaning back, watching the smoke. "You *do* feel shut in—sometimes. But there are a lot of nice people shut in with you."

"That 's what I meant," he said, quickly. "I can't stan' so many folks."

"You 're not much crowded here." The young man lifted his head. Down below they could hear the surf beating. The wind had risen. It rushed against the little house whirlingly.

The old man listened a minute. "I shall have to go down and reef her

down," he said thoughtfully. "It 's goin' to blow."

"I should say it *is* blowing," said the young man.

"Not yet," returned Uncle William. "You 'll hear it blow afore mornin' if you stay awake to listen—though it won't sound so loud up the shore where you be. This is the place for it. A good stiff blow and nobody on either side of you—for half a mile." A kind of mellow enthusiasm held the tone.

The young man smiled. "You *are* a hermit. Suppose somebody should build next you?"

"They can't."

"Why not?"

"I own it."

"A mile?"

The old man nodded. "Not the shore, of course. That 's free to all. But where anybody could build I own."

He said it almost exultantly. "I guess maybe I 'm part Indian." He smiled apologetically. "I can't seem to breathe without I have room enough, and it just come over me once, how I should feel if folks crowded down on me too much. So I bought it. I 'm what they call around here 'land-poor.' " He said it with satisfaction. "I can't scrape together money enough to buy a new boat, and it 's 's much as I can do to keep the *Jennie* patched up and going. But I 'm comfortable. I don't reelly want for anything."

"Yes, you 're comfortable." The young man glanced about the snug room.

"There ain't a lot of folks shying up over the rocks at me." He got up with deliberation, knocking the ashes from his pipe. " I 'm goin' to make things snug and put down the other anchor,"

he said. "You stay till I come back and we 'll have suthin' hot."

He put on his oil-skin hat and coat, and taking the lantern from its hook, went out into the night.

Within, the light of the swinging lamp fell on the turkey-red. It glowed. The cat purred in its depths.

III

THE artist had been dreaming. In his hand he held an open locket. The face within it was dark, like a boy's, with careless hair brushed from the temples, and strong lines. The artist knew the lines by heart, and the soft collar and loose-flowing tie and careless dress. He had been leaning back with closed eyes, watching the lithe figure, tall and spare, with the rude grace of the Steppes, the freshness of the wind. . . . How she would enjoy it—this very night—the red room perched aloft in the gale!

A fresh blast struck the house and it creaked and groaned, and righted itself.

In the lull that followed, steps sounded up the rocky path. With a snap, the young man closed the locket and sat up. The door opened on Uncle William, shining and gruff. The lantern in his hand had gone out. His hat and coat were covered with fine mist. He came across to the fire, shaking it off.

"It 's goin' to blow all right," he said, nodding to the artist.

"And it 's raining. You 're wet."

"Well, not *wet*, so to speak." He took off his hat, shaking it lightly over the stove. A crackling and fine mist rose from the hot drops. Juno lifted her head and yawned. She purred softly. The old man hung his hat and coat on the wooden pegs behind the door and seated himself by the stove, opening wide the drafts. A fresh blaze sprang up. The artist leaned forward, holding out his hands to it.

"You were gone a good while," he said. The locket had slipped from his fingers and hung lightly on its steel chain, swinging a little as he bent to the fire.

The old man nodded. "I see the *Andrew Halloran* had dragged her anchor a little, as I went out, and I stopped to fix her. It took quite a spell. I could n't find the extry anchor. He 'd got it stowed away for 'ard somewheres, and by the time I found it she was driftin' putty bad. I found a good bottom for her and made things fast before I left. I reckon she 'll hold."

"Won't he be down himself to look after her?"

"Mebbe not. It 's a goodish step, from his place, down and back. He knows I keep an eye out for her."

"Why does n't he anchor up there," said the artist, "near by?"

The old man shook his head. "He 's a kind o' set man, Andy is—part Irish and part Scotch. He al'ays *has* anchored here and I reckon he al'ays *will.* I told him when I bought the land of him he was welcome to."

"It was his land, then?"

"Most on it—I do' know as he *wanted* to sell reelly, but I offered him more 'n he could stan'. He 's a little near—Andy is." He chuckled.

The artist laughed out. "So he keeps the anchorage and right of way and you look after his boat. I don't see but he 's fairly well fixed."

"Yes, he 's putty well fixed," said the old man, slowly. "'S fur as *this* world's goods go Andy is comf'tably provided for." His eyes twinkled a little, but most of the big face was sober. "We 've been neighbors, Andy 'n' me, ever sence we was boys," he said. "I

guess there ain't a mean thing about Andy that I don't know, and he the same about me. I should feel kind o' lonesome nights not to hev his boat to look after—and know, like as not, in the mornin' he 'll come down, cussin' and swearin' 'cause she wa'n't fixed jest right." He peered into the kettle on the stove. " 'Most empty." He filled it from the pail by the sink, and resumed his seat, stretching his great legs comfortably. Juno sprang from the lounge and perched herself on his knee. He tumbled her a little, in rough affection, and rubbed his big fingers in her neck. She purred loudly, kneading her claws with swift strokes in the heavy cloth. He watched her benignly, a kind of detached humor in his eyes. "Wimmen folks is a good deal alike," he remarked dryly. "They like to be comf'tabul."

"Some of them," assented the artist.

The old man looked up with a swift twinkle. "So-o?" he said.

The artist sat up quickly. The locket swayed on its chain and his hand touched it. "What do you mean?" he said.

"Why, nuthin', nuthin'," said Uncle William, soothingly. "Only I thought you was occuppied with art and so on—?"

"I am."

Uncle William said nothing.

Presently the artist leaned forward. "Do you want to see her?" he said. He was holding it out.

Uncle William peered at it uncertainly. He rose and took down the spectacles from behind the clock and placed them on his nose. Then he reached out his great hand for the locket. The quizzical humor had gone

from his face. It was full of gentleness.

Without a word the artist laid the locket in his hand.

The light swung down from the lamp on it, touching the dark face. The old man studied it thoughtfully. On the stove the kettle had begun to hum. Its gentle sighing filled the room. The artist dreamed.

Uncle William pushed up his spectacles and regarded him with a satisfied look. "You 've had a good deal more sense 'n I was afraid you 'd have," he said dryly.

The artist woke. "You can't tell—from that." He held out his hand.

Uncle William gave it up, slowly. "I can tell more 'n you 'd think, perhaps. Wimmen and the sea are alike—some ways a good deal alike. I 've lived by the sea sixty year, you know,

and I 've watched all kinds of doings. But what I 'm surest of is that it 's deeper 'n we be." He chuckled softly. "Now, I would n't pertend to know all about her,"—he waved his hand,—"but she 's big and she 's fresh—salt, too—and she makes your heart big just to look at her—the way it ought to, I reckon. There 's things about her I don't know," he nodded toward the picture. "She may not go to church and I don't doubt but what she has tantrums, but she 's better 'n we be, and she—What did you say her name was?"

"Sergia Lvova."

"Sergia Lvova," repeated the old man, slowly, yet with a certain ease. "That 's a cur'us name. I 've heard suthin' like it, somewhere—"

"She 's Russian."

"Russian—jest so! I might 'a' known it! I touched Russia once, ran

up to St. Petersburg. Now there 's a country that don't hev breathin' space. She don't hev half the sea room she 'd o't to. Look at her—all hemmed in and froze up. You hev to squeeze past all the nations of the earth to get to her—half choked afore you fairly get there. Yes, I sailed there once, up through Skager Rack and Cattegat along up the Baltic and the Gulf of Finland, just edging along—" He held out his hand again for the locket, and studied it carefully. "Russian, is she? I might 'a' known it," he said, nodding. "She 's the sort—same look—eager and kind o' waitin'." He looked up. "How 'd you come to know her? You been there?"

"In Russia? No. She 's not there now. She 's in New York. She lives there."

"Is that so? Poor thing!" Uncle

William looked at the pictured face with compassion.

The artist smiled. "Oh, it 's not so bad. She 's happy."

"Yes, she 's happy. I can see that easy enough. She 's the kind that 's goin' to be happy." He looked again at the clear, fearless eyes. "You could n't put her anywheres she would n't sing—"

"She *does* sing. How did you know?"

Uncle William's eyes twinkled to the boyish face. "Well, I did n't *know* it —not jest that way. I did n't know as she sung songs on a platform, dressed up, like I 've heard 'em. What I meant was, her heart kind o' bubbles and sings—"

"Yes"—the artist leaned forward—"that is Sergia. It 's the way she is. She does n't sing in public. But her

voice"—his eyes grew dark—"it makes you want to laugh and cry. It 's like the wind and the sun shining—" He broke off, listening.

The old man's eyes dwelt on him kindly. "She 's with her folks, is she?"

He roused himself. "She has n't any. They all died over there—her father and brother in the riots, her mother after that. She has no one. She teaches music—piano and violin—night and day. Sometimes she gives a recital with her pupils—and she has me." He laughed a little bitterly. "It is n't an exciting life."

"I dunno 's I 'd say jest that," said Uncle William, slowly. "It ain't exactly the things that happen—" He broke off, looking at something far away. "Why, I 've had things happen to me—shipwreck, you know—winds a-blowin' and sousin' the deck—and

a-gettin' out the boats and yellin' and shoutin'— Seems 's if it ought to 'a' been excitin'. But, Lord! 'twa'n't nuthin' to what I 've felt other times— times when it was all still-like on the island here—and big—so 's 't you kind o' hear suthin' comin' to ye over the water. Why, some days it 's been so 's I 'd feel 's if I 'd *bust* if I did n't do suthin'—suthin' to let off steam."

The young man nodded. "You ought to be an artist. That 's the way they feel—some of them."

Uncle William beamed on him. "You don't say so! Must be kind o' hard work, settin' still and doin' art when you feel like that. I gen'ally go clammin', or suthin'."

The artist laughed out, boyishly. He reached out a hand for the locket.

But Uncle William held it a moment, looking down at it. "Things happen to

her—every day," he said. "You can see that, plain enough. She don't hev to be most drowned to hev feelin's." He looked up. "When you goin' to be married?"

"Not till we can afford it—years." The tone was somber.

Uncle William shook his head. "Now, I would n't talk like that, Mr. Woodworth!" He handed back the locket and pushed up his spectacles again, beaming beneath them. "Seems to me," he said slowly, studying the fire—"seems to me I would n't wait. I 'd be married right off—soon 's I got back."

"What would you live on?" said the artist.

Uncle William waited. "There 's resk," he said at last—"there 's resk in it. But there 's resk in 'most everything that tastes good. I meant to get

married once," he said after a pause. "I did n't. I guess it 's about the wust mistake I ever made. I thought this house wa'n't good enough for her." He looked about the quaint room. "'T wa'n't, neither," he added with conviction. "But she 'd 'a' rather come—I did n't know it then," he said gently.

The artist waited, and the fire crackled between them.

"If I 'd 'a' married her, I 'd 'a' seen things sooner," went on the old man. "I did n't see much beauty them days—on sea or land. I was all for a good ketch and makin' money and gettin' a better boat. And about that time she died. I begun to learn things then—slow-like—when I had n't the heart to work. If I 'd married Jennie, I 'd 'a' seen 'em sooner, bein' happy. You learn jest about the same bein' happy as

you do bein' miserable—only you learn it quicker."

"I can't give up my art," said the young man. He was looking at Uncle William with the superior smile of youth, a little lofty yet kind. "You don't allow for art," he said.

"I dunno 's I do," returned Uncle William. "It 's like makin' money, I guess—suthin' extry, thrown in, good enough if you get it, but not necessary —no, not necessary. Livin 's the thing to live for, I reckon." He stopped suddenly, as if there were no more to be said.

The artist looked at him curiously. "That 's what all the great artists have said," he commented.

Uncle William nodded. "Like enough. I ain't an artist. But I 've had sixty year of livin', off and on."

"But you 'll die poor," said the

artist, with a glance about the little room. He was thinking what a dear old duffer the man was—with his curious, impracticable philosophy of life and his big, kind ways. "You 'll die poor if you don't look out," he said again.

"Yes, I suppose I shall," said Uncle William, placidly, "'thout I make my fortune aforehand. That hot water looks to me just about right." He eyed the tea-kettle critically. "You hand over them glasses and we 'll mix a little suthin' hot, and then we 'll wash the dishes and go to bed."

The artist looked up with a start. "I must be getting back." He glanced at the dark window with its whirling sleet.

"You won't get back anywheres to-night," said Uncle William. "You could n't hear yourself think out there —let alone findin' the path. I 'll jest

shake up a bed for ye here on the lounge,—it 's a fust-rate bed; I 've slep' on it myself, time and again,—and then in the mornin' you 'll be on hand to go to work—save a trip for ye. Hand me that biggest glass and a teaspoon. I want that biggest there—second one—and a teaspoon. We 'll have things fixed up fust-rate here."

Far into the night the artist watched the ruddy room. Gleams from the fire darted up the wall and ran quivering along the red. Outside the wind struck the house and beat upon it and went back, hoarse and slow.

Down the beach the surf boomed in long rolls, holding its steady beat through the uproar. When the wind lulled for a moment the house creaked mysteriously, whispering, and when the gale returned a sound of flying missiles came with it. Now and then something

struck the roof and thudded to the ground with heavier crash.

About three o'clock Uncle William's round face was thrust through the crack of the door. "You can go to sleep all right now," he said soothingly. "There wa'n't but seven bricks left in the chimney, anyhow, and the last one 's jest come down. I counted 'em fallin'."

IV.

THE artist stood on the beach, his hands in his pockets. Near by, seated on a bit of driftwood, a man was cleaning fish. For a few minutes the artist watched the swift motion of the knife, flashing monotonously. Then he glanced at the harbor and at the two sailboats bobbing and pulling their ropes. He was tired with a long strain of work. The summer was almost done. For weeks—since the night of the big storm—he had worked incessantly. A new light had come over things,—"The light that never was on sea or land," he called it,—and he had worked feverishly. He saw the water and the rugged

land as Uncle William saw them. Through his eyes, he painted them. They took on color and bigness—simplicity. "They will call it my third style," said the artist, smiling, as he worked. "They ought to call it the Uncle William style. I did n't do it—I shall never do it again," and he worked fast.

But now the sketches were done. They were safely packed and corded. To-morrow he was going. To-day he would rest himself and do the things he would like to remember.

He looked again at the man cleaning fish. "Pretty steady work," he said, nodding toward the red pile.

The man looked up with a grunt. "Everything 's steady—that pays," he said indifferently.

The artist's eyebrows lifted a little. "So?"

"Yep." The man tossed aside another fish. "Ye can't earn money stan'in' with your hands in your pockets."

"I guess that 's so," said the artist, cheerfully. He did not remove the hands. The fingers found a few pennies in the depths and jingled them merrily.

"There 's Willum," said the man, aggressively, sweeping his red knife toward the cliff. "He 's poor—poor as poverty—an' he al'ays will be."

"What do you think is the reason?" asked the artist. The tone held respectful interest.

The man looked at him more tolerantly. "Too fond of settin'."

The artist nodded. "I 'm afraid he is."

"An' then he 's al'ays a-givin'—a little here and a little there. Why,

what Willum Benslow 's give away would 'a' made a rich man of him."

"Yes?"

"Yep. I don't s'pose I know half he 's give. But it 's a heap, Lord knows! And then he 's foolish,—plumb foolish." He rested his arms on his legs, leaning forward. "How much d' you s'pose he give me for that land—from here to my house?" He pointed up the coast.

The artist turned and squinted toward it with half-closed lids. It glowed—a riot of color, green and red, cool against the mounting sky. "I have n't the least idea," he said slowly.

"Well, you won't believe it when I tell you;—nobody 'd believe it. He paid me five hunderd dollars for it—five hunderd! It ain't wuth fifty."

The artist smiled at him genially. "Well—he 's satisfied."

"But it ain't right," said the man, gloomily. He had returned to his fish. "It ain't right. I can't bear to have Willum such a fool."

"I think I 'll go for a sail," said the artist.

The other glanced at the horizon. "It 's going to storm," he said indifferently.

"I 'll keep an eye out."

"Ye better not go."

"Think not?" He looked again at the harbor. "It 's my last chance for a sail—I 'll watch out."

"All right. 'T ain't my business," said the man. He went on slitting fish.

•

The harbor held a still light—ominously—grey with a tinge of yellow in its depths. Uncle William hurried down the face of the cliff, a telescope in his hand. Now and then he paused

on the zigzag path and swept the bay with it. The grey stillness deepened.

On the beach below, the man paused in his work to look up. As Uncle William approached he grunted stiffly. "She 's off the island," he said. He jerked a fishy thumb toward the water.

Uncle William's telescope fixed the boat and held it. His throat hummed, holding a kind of conversation with itself.

The man had returned to his fish, slitting in rough haste and tossing to one side. "Fool to go out—I told him it was coming."

The telescope descended. Uncle William regarded him mildly. "I o't to 'a' kept an eye on him," he said humbly. "I did n't jest sense he was goin'. I guess mebbe he did mention it. But I was mixin' a batch of biscuit and kind o' thinkin' to myself. When I looked

up he wa'n't there." He slid the telescope together and slipped it into his pocket. "I 'll hev to go after him," he said.

The other looked up quickly. "How 'll you go?"

Uncle William nodded toward the boat that dipped securely at anchor. "I 'll take *her*," he said.

The man laughed shortly. "The *Andrew Halloran*? I guess not!" He shut his knife with a decisive snap and stood up. "I don't trust her—not in such a storm as that 's going to be." He waved his arm toward the harbor. The greyness was shifting rapidly. It moved in swift green touches, heavy and clear—a kind of luminous dread. In its sallow light the man's face stood out tragically. "I won't reak her," he cried.

"You 'll hev to, Andrew." Uncle

William bent to the bow of the dory that was beached near by. "Jump in," he said.

The man drew back a step. The hand with the clasped knife fell to his side. "Don't you make me go, Willum," he said pacifically. "You can take the boat in welcome, but don't take *me*. It 's too much resk!"

"It 's al'ays a resk to do your duty," said Uncle William. "Jump in. I can't stand talkin'." An edge of impatience grazed the words.

The man stepped in and seized the oars. "I 'll help get her off," he said, "but I won't go."

In the green light of the harbor a smile played over Uncle William's face grotesquely. He gave a shove to the boat and sprang in. "I guess you 'll go, Andrew," he said; "you would n't want a man drowned right at your door-yard."

"You can't live in it," said Andrew. He lifted his face to the light. Far to the east a boat crawled against it. "It 'll strike in five minutes," he said.

"Like enough," said Uncle William —"like enough. Easy there!" He seized the stern of the *Andrew Halloran* and sprang on board. They worked in swift silence, hoisting the anchor, letting out the sail,—a single reef,—making it fast. "All she 'll stan'," said Uncle William. He turned to the helm.

Andrew, seated on the tiller bench, glared at him defiantly. "If she 's going out, I take her," he said.

"You get right over there and tend the sheet, Andy," said Uncle William.

In silence the other obeyed. He undid the rope, letting it out with cautious hand. The low sail caught the breeze and stiffened to it. The boat came round to the wind, dipping lightly. She

moved through the murky light as if drawn by unseen hands.

The light thickened and grew black —clouded and dense and swift. Then, with a wrench, heaven parted about them. The water descended in sheets, gray-black planes that shut them in—blinded them, crushed them. Andrew, crouching to the blows, drew in the sheet, closer, closer—hugging the wind with tense grasp. About them, the water flattened like a plate beneath the flood. When the rain shifted a second they saw it, a gray-white floor, stretching as far as the eye could reach. Uncle William bent to it, scanning the east. "Hold her tight, Andy," he yelled. His leg was braced against the tiller, and his back strained to it. His hat was gone. The tufts of hair, lashed flat to the big skull, were mere lines. "Hold her tight! Make fast!" he yelled again.

Through the dark they drove, stunned and grim. The minutes lengthened to ages and beat them, eternally, in torment. Water and clouds were all about them—underneath them, and over. The boat, towering on each wave, dropped from its crest like a ball. Andy, crouching on the bottom of the boat, held on like grim death. Then, in a breath the storm was gone. With a sucking sound it had swept beyond them, its black skirts hurtling behind it as it ran, kicking a wake of foam.

Andrew from beneath the bench lifted his sopped head, like a turtle, breathless. Uncle William, bent far to the right, gazed to the east. Slowly his face lightened. He drew his big hand down its length, mopping off the wet. "There she is!" he said in a deep voice. "Let her out, Andy."

With stiff fingers, Andrew reached to

the sail, untying a second reef and loosing it to the wind.

The water still tossed in tumbling waves and the fitful rain blew past. But the force of the storm was gone. Away to the north it towered, monstrous and black.

With his eyes strained to the east, Uncle William held the tiller. "We 'll make, it, Andy," he said quietly. "We 'll make it yet if the *Jennie* holds out—" Suddenly he stood upright, his hand on the tiller, his eyes glued fast.

"Luff her," he cried. "She's gone—Luff her, I tell you!" He sprang back, jamming the tiller from him. "Let her out, Andy, every inch!"

The canvas flew wide to the wind. The great boat responded to its touch. She rose like a bird and dipped, in sweeping sidewise flight, to the race.

Across the water something bobbed—black, uncertain.

"Look sharp, Andy," said Uncle William.

Andrew peered with blinking eyes across the waste. The spirit of the chase was on him. His indifference had washed from him, like a husk, in that center of terror. His eyes leaped to the mass and glowed on it. "Yep," he said solemnly, "he 's held on—he 's there!"

"Keep your eye on her, Andy. Don't lose her." Uncle William's big arms strained to the wind, forcing the great bird in her course. Nearer she came and nearer, circling with white wings that opened and closed silently, softly. Close to the bobbing boat she grazed, hung poised a moment, and swept away with swift stroke.

The artist had swung through the air

at the end of a huge arm. As he looked up from the bottom of the boat where he lay, the old man's head, round and smooth, like a boulder, stood out against the black above him. It grew and expanded and filled the horizon—thick and nebulous and dizzy.

"Roll him over, Andy," said Uncle William, "roll him over. He 's shipped too much."

V

NCLE WILLIAM sat on the beach mending his nets. He drew the twine deftly in and out, squinting now and then across the harbor at a line of smoke that dwindled into the sky. Each time he looked it was fainter on the horizon. He whistled a little as he bent to his work.

Over the rocks Andrew appeared, bearing on his back a huge bundle of nets. He threw it on the sand with a grunt. Straightening himself, he glanced at the line of smoke. "*He 's* gone," he said, jerking his thumb toward it.

"He 's gone," assented Uncle William, cheerfully.

Andrew kicked the bundle of nets apart and drew an end toward him, spreading it along the beach. "He 's left *you* poorer 'n he found you," he said. His tough fingers worked swiftly among the nets, untying knots and straightening meshes.

"I dunno 'bout that," said Uncle William. His eyes followed the whiff of smoke kindly.

"You kep' him a good deal, off and on. He must 'a' e't considerable," said Andrew. "And now he 's up and lost your boat for you." He glanced complacently at the *Andrew Halloran* swinging at anchor. "You 'll never see *her* again," he said. He gave a final toss to the net.

"Mebbe not," said Uncle William. "Mebbe not." His eyes were on the

horizon, where the gray-blue haze lingered lightly. The blue sky dipped to meet it. It melted in sunlight. Uncle William's eyes returned to his nets.

"How you going to get along 'bout a boat?" asked Andrew, carelessly.

Uncle William paused. He looked up to the clear sky. "I should n't need her much more this fall, anyways," he said. "An' come spring, I'll get another. I 've been needin' a new boat a good while."

Andrew grunted. He glanced a little jealously at the *Andrew Halloran*. "Got the money?" he asked.

"Well, not *got* it, so to speak," said Uncle William, "but I reckon I shall have it when the time comes."

Andrew's face lightened a little. "What you countin' on?" he said.

Uncle William considered. "There 's

the fish. Gunnion hain't settled with me yet for my fish."

Andrew nodded. "Seventy-five dollars."

"And I 've got quite a count of lobsters up to the boardin'-house—"

Andrew's small eyes squinted knowingly. "Out o' season?"

Uncle William returned the look benignly. "We did n't date the 'count—just lumped 'em, so much a catch; saves trouble."

Andrew chuckled. "I 've saved trouble that way myself." He made a rough calculation. "It won't make a hunderd, all told. How you goin' to get the rest?"

"Mebbe I shall borrow it," said Uncle William. He looked serenely at the sky. "Like enough *he 'll* send a little suthin'," he added.

"Like enough!" said Andrew.

"He mentioned it," said Uncle William.

"He 's gone," said Andrew. He gave a light *p-f-f* with his lips and screwed up his eyes, seeming to watch a bubble sail away.

Uncle William smiled. "You don't have faith, Andy," he said reproachfully. "Folks do do things, a good many times—things that they say they will. You o't to have faith."

Andrew snuffed. "When I pin my faith to a thing, Willum, I like to hev suthin' to stick the pin into," he said scornfully.

They worked in silence. Seagulls dipped about them. Off shore the sea-lions bobbed their thick, flabby black heads inquiringly in the water and climbed clumsily over the kelp-covered rocks.

Andrew's eye rested impassively on

their gambols. "Wuthless critters," he said.

Uncle William's face softened as he watched them. "I kind o' like to see 'em, Andy—up and down and bobbin' and sloppin' and scramblin'; you never know *where* they 'll come up next."

"Don't need to," grumbled Andy. "Can't eat the blamed things—nor wear 'em. I tell you, Willum,"—he turned a gloomy eye on his companion,—"I tell you, you set too much store by wuthless things."

"Mebbe I do," said William, humbly.

"This one, now—this painter fellow." Andrew gave a wave of his hand that condensed scorn. "What 'd you get out o' him, a-gabblin' and sailin' all summer?"

"I dunno, Andy, as I could jest put into words," said William, thoughtfully, "what I *did* get out o' him."

"Ump! I guess you could n't—nor anybody else. When he sends you anything for that boat o' yourn, you jest let me know it, will you?"

"Why, yes, Andy, I 'll let you know if you want me to. I 'll be reel pleased to let you know," said Uncle William.

VI

IT was Indian summer. Uncle William was mending his chimney. He had built a platform to work on. Another man would have clung to the sloping roof while he laid the bricks and spread the mortar. But Uncle William had constructed an elaborate platform with plenty of room for bricks and the pail of mortar, and space in which to stretch his great legs. It was a comfortable place to sit and look out over Arichat harbor. Andy, who had watched the preparations with scornful eye, had suggested an arm-chair and cushion.

"I like to be comf'tabul," assented

Uncle William. "I know I do. I don't like to work none too well, anyhow. Might as well be comf'tabul if you can."

The platform was comfortable. Even Andy admitted that, when Uncle William persuaded him to climb up one day, on the pretext of advising whether the row of bricks below the roof line would hold. It was a clear, warm day, with little clouds floating lightly, as in summer. Andy had climbed the ladder grumbling.

"Nice place to see," suggested Uncle William.

Andy peered down the chimney hole. "You will have to take off the top row all around," he said resentfully.

"Ye think so, do ye? I kind o' thought so myself. They seemed sort o' tottery. But I thought mebbe they 'd hold. Sit down, Andy, sit down." He

pushed the pail of mortar a little to one side to make room.

Andy edged away. "Can't stop," he said. He was searching with his foot for the ladder.

"What you going to do?" demanded Uncle William.

Andy glanced at the sky. "I 'm going to take in the *Andrew Halloran.*" He was already on his way down the ladder.

Uncle William pursued him, peering over. "You 'll have to have me to help ye, Andy. Can't you jest wait till to-morrow—till I get my chimbley done?"

"You 've been a month now," said Andy. He was glowering at the bay and the little boat bobbing below.

"I know it, Andy, I know it." Uncle William was descending the ladder with slow care. "But I don't want my mortar to freeze, and I 'm kind o' 'fraid of

its comin' off cold again to-night. I was jest goin' to begin to hurry up. I was goin' to begin to-day."

"I can get along without you," said Andrew, doggedly.

"Why, no, you can't, Andy. How you goin' to haul her up?" Uncle William spoke reproachfully.

Andy moved away. "I can do it, I guess." He was mumbling it to his teeth. "I don't need anybody's help."

With a sigh and a look of affection at the platform and the pail and the blue sky above, Uncle William followed him down the rocky path.

They worked busily all the morning, towing in the *Andrew Halloran,* cleaning her up and stowing away tackle, making her ready for the winter.

In the afternoon Uncle William mounted the roof again. His face, under its vast calm, wore a look of re-

solve. He looked thoughtfully down the chimney hole. Then he sat down on the platform and took up his trowel. He balanced it on his palm and looked at the pile of bricks. His gaze wandered to the sky. It swept the bay and came back across the moors. A look of soft happiness filled it; the thin edges of resolve melted before it. "Best kind of weather," murmured Uncle William, "best kind—" His eye fell on the pile of bricks and he took up one, looking at it affectionately. He laid it in place and patted down the mortar, rumbling to himself.

When Andy came by, half an hour later, three bricks were in place. Uncle William nodded to him affably. "Where goin', Andy?"

"How much you got done?" demanded Andy.

Uncle William looked at it thought-

fully. "Well, there 's quite a piece. Comin' up?" he said hopefully.

"It don't show any."

"No, it don't show much—yet. It 's kind of down below.—Think we 're goin' to have a change?" The tone was full of hopeful interest.

Andy nodded. "Freeze inside of twenty-four hours."

Uncle William scanned the horizon.

"When you calculatin' to finish?" asked Andy.

"Well, I was thinkin' of finishin' to-night."

Andy's gaze sought the sun.

Uncle William took up another brick.

Andy seated himself on a rock. He had done a good day's work. His conscience was clear; and then William worked better when Andy was around, and Andy took pride in it. "Where 'd you get your bricks?" he asked.

Uncle William looked at the one in his hand. "I wheeled them over from the Bodet cellar-place. The' 's quite a pile left there yet."

"They all good?"

"Putty good." Uncle William was working thoughtfully. "We 've set by them bricks a good many times, Andy."

"Yep."

"You remember the things she used to give us to eat?"

Andy swung about. "Who give us?"

"Old Mis' Bodet."

Andy's eye lighted. "So she did. I 'd forgot all about 'em."

Uncle William nodded. "There was a kind of tart she used to make—"

Andy broke in. A look of genuine enthusiasm filled his eye. "I know—that gingery, pumpkin kind—"

"That 's it. And you and me and

Benjy used to sit and toast our toes by the fire and eat it—"

"He was a mean cuss," said Andy.

"Who? Benjy? Why, we was al-'ays fond of Benjy!" Uncle William's face beamed over the edge of the roof. "We was fond of him, wa'n't we?"

"I wa'n't," said Andy, shortly. "He 'd lick a feller every chance he got."

"Yes, that 's so—I guess that 's so." Uncle William was slapping on the mortar with heavy skill. "But he did it kind o' neat, did n't he?" His eye twinkled to his work. "'Member that time you 'borrowed' his lobster-pot—took it up when it happened to have lobsters in it, and kep' the lobsters—not to hev 'em waste?"

Andy's face was impassive.

"Oh, you was fond of Benjy!" Uncle William spoke cheeringly. "You 've

kind o' forgot, I guess. And I set a heap o' store by him. He was jest about our age—twelve year the summer they moved away. I cried much as a week, off and on I should think. Could n't seem to get ust to not havin' him around."

"Reckon he 's dead by this time?" Andy spoke hopefully. A little green gleam had crept into his eye.

Uncle William leaned over, looking down at him reproachfully. "Now, what makes you say that, Andy? He don't hev no more call to be dead 'n we do. We was both fond of him."

Andy stirred uneasily. "I liked him well enough, but it ain't any use talkin' about folks that 's moved away, or dead."

"Do you feel that way, Andy? Now I don't feel so." Uncle William's gaze was following a floating cloud. "I feel

as if they was kind o' near us; not touching close, but round somewheres. Now, I would n't reelly say Benjy Bodet was in that cloud—"

Andy stared at it suspiciously.

"He ain't reelly there, but it makes me feel the way he did. I used to get up kind o' light in the mornin', 'cause I was goin' to see Benjy. The' wa'n't ever anybody I was so fond of, except Jennie—and you, mebbe."

Andy's gaze was looking out to sea. "You was mighty thick with that painter chap," he said gruffly.

"That wa'n't the same,"—Uncle William spoke thoughtfully,—"not quite the same."

The gloom in Andy's face lifted.

"I 've thought about that a good many times," went on Uncle William. "It 's cur'us. You get to know folks that 's a good deal nicer than your own

folks that you was born and brought up and have lived and quarreled with,—and you get to know 'em a good deal better some ways—but they ain't the same as your own."

'Andy's face had grown almost mild. "I guess that 's right," he said. "Now there 's Harr'et—I 've lived with Harr'et a good many year."

Uncle William nodded. "She come from Digby way, did n't she?"

"Northeast o' Digby. And some days I feel as if I wa'n't even acquainted with her."

Uncle William chuckled.

'Andy glanced at the sun. "I must be gettin' home. It 's supper-time." His gaze sought the ridge-pole. The few rows of bricks set above its line gleamed red and white in the sun. "You won't get that done to-night." The tone was not acrid. It was almost sympathetic—for Andy.

Uncle William glanced at it placidly. "I reckon I shall. There 's a moon, you know. And this is a pleasant place to set. It ought to be quite nice up here by moonlight."

He sat and watched Andy's figure down the road. Then he took up the trowel once more, whistling. The floating cloud had sailed to the horizon. It grew rosy red and opened softly, spreading in little flames. The glow of color spread from north to south. A breeze had sprung up and ruffled the bay. Uncle William glanced at it and fell to work. Andy's right—it 's goin' to change."

He worked till the cold, clear moon came over the hill behind him. It shone on the chimney rising, straight and firm, above the little house. By its light William put on the finishing touches.

VII

HE winter was a hard one. The cold that had set in the night the chimney was finished did not abate. The island froze to its core and a stinging keenness held the air. The very rocks seemed charged with it. One almost listened to hear them crack in the stillness of the long nights. Little snow fell, and it was soon dispersed—whirled away on the fierce blasts that swept the island. Uncle William went back and forth between woodshed and house, carrying great armfuls of wood. A roaring fire warmed the red room, Juno purred in comfort in its depths. The pile of wood in the shed lowered

fast, and the pile of money hoarded behind the loose brick in the chimney lowered with it—the money faster than the wood, perhaps. There was a widow with three children, a mile down the shore. Her husband had been drowned the year before, and there was no brick loose in her chimney to look behind as the woodpile diminished. Old Grandma Gruchy, too, who had outlived all her men folks and at ninety-three was still tough and hearty, had need of things.

Between filling the wood-box and looking after the weather and keeping a casual eye on the widows and the fatherless, Uncle William had a full winter. He was not a model housekeeper at best, and ten o'clock of winter mornings often found him with breakfast dishes unwashed and the floor unswept. Andy, coming in for his

daily visit, would cast an uncritical eye at the frying-pan, and seat himself comfortably by the stove. It did not occur to either of them, as Uncle William pottered about, finishing the dishes, that Andy should take a hand. Andy had women folks to do for him.

As the winter wore on, letters came from the artist—sometimes gay and full of hope, sometimes a little despondent. Uncle William read the letters to Andy, who commented on them according to his lights. "He don't seem to be makin' much money," he would say from time to time. The letters revealed flashes of poverty and a kind of fierce struggle. "He 's got another done," Uncle William would respond: "that makes three; that 's putty good." Andy had ceased to ask about the money for the boat—when it was coming. He seemed to have accepted the

fact that there would never be any, as placidly as William himself. If there was dawning in his mind the virtuous resolve to help out a little when the time came, no one would have guessed it from the grim face that surveyed Uncle William's movements with a kind of detached scorn. Now and then Andy let fall a word of advice as to the best way of adjusting a tin on the stove, or better methods for cleaning the coffee-pot. Sometimes Uncle William followed the advice. It generally failed to work.

It was late in the winter that Andy appeared one morning bringing a letter from the artist. Uncle William searched for his spectacles and placed them on his nose with a genial smile.

Andy had not relinquished the letter. "I can read it for ye," he volunteered.

"I can read it all right now, Andy,

thank ye." Uncle William reached out a hand for it.

Andy's fingers relaxed on it grudgingly. He had once or twice been allowed to open and read the letters in the temporary absence of Uncle William's spectacles. He found them more entertaining than when Uncle William read them. He privately suspected him of suppressing bits of news.

Uncle William looked up from the lines with pleased countenance. "Now, that 's good. He 's finished up five on 'em."

"Five what?"

"Picters," responded Uncle William, spelling it out slowly. "There 's one of my house,"—lofty pride held the voice,—"and one of the cove down below, and two up by the old Bodet place, and one on the hill, this side of

your place. Now, that 's quite a nice lot, ain't it?"

"What 's he going to do with 'em," asked Andy.

"There 's a kind of exhibit goin' on." Uncle William consulted the letter. "'The Exhibition of American Artists'—suthin' like a fair, I take it. And he 's goin' to send 'em."

"Thinks he 'll take a prize, I s'pose." Andy's tone held fine scepticism.

"Well, I dunno. He don't say nuthin' about a prize. He does kind o' hint that he'll be sendin' me suthin' pretty soon. I guess likely there 'll be prizes. He o't to take one if there is. He made fust-rate picters, fust-rate—"

"The whole lot wa' n't wuth the *Jennie*." Andy spoke with sharp jealousy.

"Well, mebbe not—mebbe not. Want a game of checkers, Andy?"

"*I* don't care," sullenly. Uncle William brought out the board and arranged the pieces with stiff fingers.

Andy watched the movements, his eye callous to pleasure.

"It 's your move, Andy."

Andy drew up to the table and reached out a hand. . . . The spirit of the game descended upon him. He pushed forward a man with quick fingers. "Go ahead."

Uncle William took time. His fingers hovered here and there in loving calculation. At last he lifted the piece and moved it slowly forward.

"Same move you al'ays make," said Andy, contemptuously.

"Sometimes I beat that way, don't I?"

"And sometimes you don't." Andy shoved forward another piece. The quick movement expressed scorn of dawdlers.

Uncle William met it mildly. He set his man in place with slow care.

Andy paused. He snorted a little. He bent above the board, knitting his forehead. His hand reached out and drew back. The fingers drummed a little on the edge of the board.

Uncle William, leaning forward, a hand on either knee, beamed on him benignantly.

Andy shifted a little in his chair. "You 're going to get into trouble," he said warningly, "if you move that way."

"Like enough, like enough. I gen-'ally do. Is it my move?"

"No," growled Andy. He returned to the board. The game was on in earnest. Now and then Andy grunted or moved a leg, and once or twice Uncle William arose to put more wood into the glowing stove. But he did it with

the gaze of a sleep-walker. Outside the wind had risen and dashed fiercely against the little house. Neither man lifted his head to listen. Their hands reached mechanically to the pieces. They jumped men and placed them one side with impassive faces. The board was clearing fast. Only seven men remained. Andy moved forward a piece with a swift flourish. He gave a little growl of triumph.

Uncle William studied the board. At last, with a heavy sigh, he lifted a piece and moved it cautiously.

Andy made the counter move in triumphant haste. "King," he announced.

Uncle William covered the man, a little smile dawning in his eye. He looked at the pieces affectionately. A chuckle sounded somewhere in the room.

Andy looked up quickly. He glanced again at the board. Wrath froze his gaze.

Uncle William leaned back, nodding at him with genial meaning. A little conscious triumph flavored the nod.

Andy shoved back from the board. "Well, why don't you take it? Take it if you 're goin' to, and don't set there cackling!"

"Why, Andy!" Uncle William moved the man mildly.

Andy shoved the counter in place with scornful touch.

Uncle William moved again.

Andy got up, looking sternly for his hat.

"Can't you stay to dinner, Andy?"

"No."

"I was goin' to have a little meat."

"Can't stay."

"It 's stormin' putty hard."

"*I* don't care!" He moved toward the door.

Uncle William took down an oil-skin coat from its peg. "You better put this on if ye can't stay. No use in gettin' wet through."

Andy put it on and buttoned it up in fierce silence.

Uncle William watched him benignly. "If 't was so 's 't you could stay, we could play another after dinner—play the rubber. You beat *me* last time, you know." He took off the stove-lid and peered in.

Andy's eye had relaxed a little under its gloom. "When you goin' to have dinner?" he asked.

"I was thinkin' of havin' it putty soon. I can have it right off if you 'll stay—must be 'most time." He pulled the great watch from its fob pocket and looked at it with absent eye.

His gaze deepened. He looked up slowly. Then he smiled—a cheerful smile that took in Andy, the board with its scattered checkers, Juno on the lounge, and the whole red room.

"Well, what time is it?" said Andy.

"It 's five minutes to three, Andy. Guess you 'd better stay," said Uncle William.

VIII

NCLE WILLIAM carried the letter up the zigzag rocks in his big fingers. A touch of spring was in the air, but the *Andrew Halloran* rocked alone at the foot of the cliff. Uncle William turned back once to look at her. Then he pursued his way up the rocky cliff. He had not heard from the artist for over a month. He glanced down curiously at the letter in his hand, once or twice, as he climbed the cliff. It was a woman's handwriting.

He sat down by the table, tearing open the envelope with cautious fingers. A strip of bluish paper fluttered from it and fell to the floor. Uncle William

bent over and picked it up. He looked at it a little bashfully and laid it on the table. He spread the letter before him, resting his elbows on the table and bending above it laboriously. As he read, an anxious line came between his eyes. "Now, that 's too bad—sick in bed— I want to know— Well, well! Pshaw, you need n't 'a' done that! Of course I 'll go." He picked up the bluish slip and looked at it. He pushed the spectacles back on his head and sat surveying the red room. He shook his head slowly. "He must be putty sick to feel like that," he said.

He took up the letter again, spelling it out slowly.

"MY DEAR MR. BENSLOW: You have not forgotten Alan Woodworth, the artist who was in Arichat last summer? I am writing to tell you that he is very ill. He has not been well for two months or more, and for the last three weeks he has been very ill indeed. He is in his rooms alone and there is no one

to look after him. His friends have tried all along to have him go to a hospital, or to let them take care of him. But until two or three weeks ago he would have times of partial recovery—days when he seemed perfectly well. So no one has guessed how really ill he is, and they suppose now that he has gone away from the city to recuperate. No one, except me, knows that he is still in his rooms. The door is locked and no one answers if you go there. I am writing you as a last resort. He has told me about you—how good you were to him last summer—"

Uncle William looked up, perplexed. "Sho, now! What does she mean by that? I did n't do nuthin'—nuthin' to speak of."

"I feel as if he would let you in and let you do things for him. He has talked about you to me, since he came back; and in his illness, earlier, when the fever was on, he would call for you—talking and muttering in his sleep. If you could come down for a little while, I feel almost sure that it would give him the start he needs. The fever makes him distrustful of every one, but I know that he would see you. I am inclosing a check for the trip. It is really money that belongs to him—to Alan. He gave me last year a beautiful present—something far too expensive for him to give; and now that he needs the money—needs to see you—more than I need the jewel, I am sending

it to you, begging that you will come very soon if you can. Alan said that he had told you about me. You will not wonder who I am or why I am writing. I hope that I shall see you and know you when you come.

"Sincerely yours,

"SERGIA LVOVA."

Uncle William nodded at the letter with a genial smile, as if he saw the girl herself and responded to the wish. He returned the letter with the blue slip to the envelope and stowed it away in his pocket. He surveyed the room again, shaking his head. "I could n't take their money, nohow," he said slowly. "I must go and see Andy. He 'll help out. He 'll be reel glad to."

He rose and began to set the table, bringing out the smoked herring and bread and tea and foxberries with lavish hand. He sat down with a look of satisfaction. Juno, from the red lounge, came across, jumping into the chair beside him. She rubbed expect-

antly against him. He fed her bits of the herring with impartial hand. When the meal was over, he went to the chimney and took out the loose brick, reaching in behind for the money. He counted it slowly. "Not near enough," he said, shaking his head. "I knew there wa'n't. I must go and see Andy."

He washed the dishes and put them away, then he combed his tufts of hair and tied his neckerchief anew.

He found Andrew outside his house, feeding the hens. They stood in silence, watching the scramble for bits. "Shoo!" said Andrew, making a dash for a big cochin-china. "She eats a lot more 'an her share," he grumbled, shaking out the dish. "Comin' in?"

"I 've got a little suthin' to talk over with ye," said William.

"Come out behind the barn," said Andrew.

Seated on a well-worn bench with a glimpse of the bay in the distance, William drew out the envelope. "I 've got a letter—"

Andy eyed it. "From that painter chap?"

"Well, not exactly. But it 's about him. He 's in a good deal of trouble—"

"What 's he been doin'?" demanded Andy.

"He 's been bein' sick," said William, reproachfully.

"Oh!" Andy's face fell.

"He 's sick now," went on Uncle William. He drew the letter from its envelope. "He 's feeling putty bad."

"What's the matter of him?" said Andy, gruffly.

Uncle William studied the letter. "It 's a kind o' fever—I guess—intermittent. Runs for a while, then lets up a day or two, and then runs again. We

had it once—don't you remember?—the whole crew, that time we broke down off Madagascar? 'Member how sick we felt?" Uncle William looked at him mildly.

Andy's eye was fixed on the bay. "How d' you know it 's the same?" he said.

"Well, I don't *know* it 's the same—not just the same, but she says—"

"*Who* says?" Andy whirled about.

"Why, *she* says — Sergia says. — Did n't I jest tell you, Andy?"

"You did n't tell me nuthin'," said Andy. He had returned to the bay.

"She is his—she is goin' to marry him," said William.

"Huh!"

There was silence for a minute, while Andrew digested the morsel. "When they goin' to be married?" he said at last.

Uncle William shook his head. "That 's jest it, Andy. They 're in a heap o' trouble."

Andy stirred uneasily. "What 'd she write to *you* for?"

"I 'm comin' to that—if you'll give me time. She thought mebbe I could help—"

Andy moved a little away. "You hain't got the means," he said decisively.

"No"—the tone was soothing—"but I can get it, mebbe. She wants me to come down."

"To New York? *You!*" Andy looked at him.

William returned the look apologetically. "Does sound ridiculous, don't it, Andy? I should n't ever 'a' thought of the thing myself, but she says he kind o' needs me. Keeps askin' for me when the fever is on, and don't

seem to get along much when it lets up. She kind o' thinks if I was there, it would help him to brace up, somehow, a little."

Andy made no response. The green light was dawning far down in his eye.

Uncle William watched it. "It 's jest a sick man's fancy, like enough."

"When you goin'?" said Andy.

"I thought 'bout day after to-morrow."

"It 'll cost a heap."

"I know it."

"You 've got it, I s'pose?" indifferently.

"Some of it," said William.

Andy moved a little farther away. He was very near the edge of the bench.

Uncle William moved over by him, and laid a hand on his knee. "I was goin' to ask you to lend me a hunderd, 'Andy."

Andy wriggled a little. "You don't *hev* to go," he said feebly.

"If he needs me, I 'll have to. I ain't ever been needed much—livin' alone so. You don't know how 't is. You have somebody to need you. Harriet needs you—"

"Lord, yes, Harr'et needs me. Don't doubt she needs me this minute—pail o' water or suthin'." Andrew chuckled gloomily.

"And you hev your chickens, too." Uncle William fixed his glance placidly on a strutting fowl that had appeared around the corner, cocking a surprised eye at them. William regarded her thoughtfully. "When a man 's alone, there ain't much he can do for folks," he said slowly, "except feed Juno night and mornin',—and she catches so many mice it ain't really wuth while. Now a hen needs to be fed."

"Guess they do," grumbled Andy.

"And a cow," went on Uncle William, "but there—" He checked himself. "What am I talkin' about? How 'd I ever keep a cow? What 'd I do with the milk? I could n't eat a whole cowful." He sat gazing with far-off eyes at the glimpse of blue water.

Andy chewed scornfully on a bit of dry grass.

William turned to him suddenly. "We 'll go down and draw out the money to-morrow morning," he said.

Andy chewed anxiously. "I dunno as I can let you have it," he protested.

"Oh, yes, you 'll let me. You see I *need* it, Andy, and I 'm goin' to pay you six per cent. How much do you get at the bank? Not more 'n five, do you?"

"Four and a half," said Andy, grudgingly.

"Four and a half. Well, you see, I give you six. So there 's a dollar and a half clear gain."

Andrew's eyes narrowed to the dollar and a half and fed on it awhile. "I shall hev to ask Harr'et," he said.

"Now, I would n't ask Harriet." Uncle William spoke soothingly. "She don't agree with you and me a good many times—Harriet don't."

Andrew admitted it. He chewed awhile in silence. "You 'll give me a mortgage?" he said at last. The tone was crafty.

"On my place!" Uncle William was roused. "No, sir, I don't give mortgages to nobody."

"Then I don't see as I can let you hev it," said Andy. "It 's fair to ask for a mortgage. What if anything should happen to ye—down there in

New York? Where 'd *I* be?" He looked at him reproachfully.

"You *would* miss me, Andy, and I know it. I 'm goin' to be careful. I shan't take no more resks 'n I have to."

"Nor me, neither," said Andy.

"That 's right, Andy, you be careful, too, while I 'm gone. Why, 't would n't ever be like home—to come back and not find you here."

Andy's eyes widened. "What you talkin' 'bout?" he said.

Uncle William's gaze was on him affectionately. He looked a little puzzled. "I dunno jest what I *did* start to say," he said apologetically. "I was thinkin' what a store I set by you, Andy."

Andy's face softened a trifle. "Now, look here, Willum, a mortgage is fair. It would n't hurt you none, nor your place—"

William shook his head. "I could

n't do it, Andy. I would n't reelly trust you with a mortgage. You might get scared and foreclose some day if I could n't pay the interest, and you 'd be ashamed enough—doin' a thing like that."

The next day Andy drew the hundred from the bank and turned it over to William without even a note to guard his sacred rights. Andy had tried in the night watches to formulate a note. He had selected the best, from a row of crafty suggestions, about four o'clock. But later, as he and William went up the road, the note dropped by the way.

Uncle William stowed the money in his pocket with a comfortable smile. "You 've done the right thing, Andy, and I shall pay you back when I can. You 'll get your interest reg'lar—six per cent."

Andy's face held a kind of subdued

gloom. He mourned not as those without hope, but with a chastened expectancy. To lend William money had almost the fine flavor of gambling.

He saw him off the following morning, with a sense of widened interests. He carried, moreover, an additional burden. "Remember, Andy," Uncle William called to him as the boat moved away, "she don't like potato, and she won't touch a mite of fish—'ceptin' herrin'." Juno had been intrusted to him.

Andy grinned a sickly good-by. "Good-by, Willum; I 'll do as well as I can by her." He turned away with a sudden sense of loss. The island seemed very empty. Juno did not like Andy, and he was needed at home. The mental effort of thinking up a menu three times a day that did not include fish and potato for a magnificent creature like Juno weighed heavily on him. He had proposed bringing her down to

the house, thinking to shift the burden on to Harriet, but Uncle William had refused sternly. "She would n't be comfortable, Andy. The' 's a good deal of soap and water down to your house and she wouldn't like it. You can run up two or three times, easy, to see she 's all right. Mebbe you 'll get fond of her."

Andrew had no rosy hopes of fondness, but as he turned away from the wharf, there seemed no place on the island that would hold him so comfortably as the little house on the cliff. He climbed the rocky path to it and opened the door. Juno sprang down from her lounge. When she saw who it was she gave an indifferent lick to her front leg, as if she always jumped down to lick her leg. Then she sat staring before her. Presently she jumped back on the lounge and turned her back to the room, looking out of the

window and blinking from time to time. The smoke of the steamer was dwindling in the distance.

Andy sat down in a vacant chair by the stove, staring at nothing. The sun poured in. It filled the room with warmth. Andy's eyes rested on it vacantly. The stillness was warm and big. It seemed a kind of presence. Andy drew his hand across his eyes and got up. He went over and stood by the lounge, peering out. The smoke was gone. Juno turned her head and blinked an eye or two, indifferent. She ignored him pointedly. Her gaze returned to the sea. Andy had half put out his hand to stroke her. He drew it back. He had a sudden bitter desire to swear or kick something. He went out hastily, closing the door behind him. Juno, with her immovable gaze, stared out to sea.

IX

UNCLE WILLIAM sniffed the air of the docks with keen relish. The spring warmth had brought out the smells of lower New York teemingly. There was a dash of salt air and tar, and a dim odor floating—of decayed vegetables and engine-grease and dirt. It was the universal port-smell the world over, and Uncle William took it in in leisurely whiffs as he watched the play of life in the dockshed—the backing of horses and the shouting of the men, the hollow sound of hoofs on the worn planks and the trundling hither and thither of boxes and barrels and bales.

He was in no hurry to leave the dock. It was a part of the journey—the sense of leisure. Men who travel habitually by sea do not rush from the vessel that has brought them to port, gripsack in hand. There are innumerable details—duties, inspections and quarantines, and delays and questionings. The sea gives up her cargo slowly. The customs move with the swift leisure of those who live daily between Life and the Deep Sea—without hurry and without rest.

Uncle William watched it all in good-humored detachment. He made friends with half the shed, wandering in and out through the crowd, his great bulk towering above it. Here and there he helped a fat, heavy baby down the length of the shed, or lifted aside a big box that blocked the way. He might have been the Presiding Genius of the

place. Men took him in with a good-humored wink, as he towered along, and women looked after him gratefully. Amid the bustle and enforced waiting, he was the only soul at rest. Time belonged to him. He was at home. He had played his part in similar scenes in hundreds of ports. The city bubbling and calling outside had no bewilderments for Uncle William. New York was only one more foreign port, and he had touched too many to have fear of them. They were all alike—exorbitant cab-men, who came down on their fare if you stood by your box and refused to let it be lifted till terms were made; rum-shops and gambling-holes, and worse, hedging the way from the wharf; soiled women haunting one's steps, if one halted a bit or turned to the right or left in indecision. He had talked with the women of every port.

They were a huge band, a great sisterhood that reached thin hands about the earth, touching it with shame; and they congregated most where the rivers empty their burden of filth into the sea. Uncle William knew them well. He could steer a safe path among them; and he could turn a young man, hesitating, with foolish, confident smile on his face. Uncle William had not been in New York for twelve years, but he had a sailor's unerring instinct for the dangers and the comforts of a port. He knew which way hell lay, and which of the drivers, backing and cursing and calling, one could trust. He signaled to one with his eye.

"What 'll ye charge to give this young feller a lift?" Uncle William indicated the youth beside him.

The driver looked him over with keen eye. "That 's all right." He

moved along on the seat to make room. "Come on, young man."

The youth climbed up with clumsy foot.

"You might know of a job," suggested Uncle William. "He looks strong and willin'."

The man nodded back. "I 'll keep an eye on him, sir." The van rumbled away and Uncle William faced the crowd once more.

He made friends as he moved among the throngs of hurrying men and women. Men who never saw him again recalled his face sometimes at night, as they wakened for a minute from sleep. The big smile reached to them across time and gave them a sense of the goodness of life before they turned again and slept.

If he had been a little man, Uncle William would still have run hither

and thither through the crowd, a kind of gnome of usefulness. But his great frame gave him advantage. He was like a mountain among them—with the breath of winds about it—or some huge, quiet engine at sea, making its way with throbbing power.

If the thought of the artist crossed Uncle William's mind, it did not disturb him. He was accustomed to do what he called his duty; and it had for him the simplicity, common to big men, of being the thing next at hand. Like a force of nature he laid hold on it, and out of the ground and the sky and the thrill of life, he wrought beauty upon it. If this were philosophy or religion, Uncle William did not know it. He called it "jest livin' along."

It was ten o'clock before he reached the artist's rooms, and his rap at the

door, gentle as a woman's, brought no response. He rapped again.

"What 's wanted?" It was the querulous voice of a sick man.

Uncle William set the door ajar with his foot while he reached behind him for his box.

The artist had sprung up in bed and was staring at the door. In the dim light from the street below, his face stood out rigidly white.

Uncle William looked at it kindly as he came across. "There, there," he said soothingly. "I guess I 'd lie down." He put his hands on the young man's shoulders, pushing him back gently.

The artist yielded to the touch, staring at him with wide eyes. "Who—are—you?" he said. The words were a whisper.

Uncle William's smile deepened. "I guess ye know *me* all right, don't ye?"

The artist continued to stare at him. "You came through the door. It was locked."

"Shucks, no!" said Uncle William. "'T wa'n't locked any more 'n I be. You jest forgot it."

"Did I?" The tense look broke. "I thought you had come again."

"Well, I hev."

"I don't mean that way. Sit down." He looked feebly for a chair.

Uncle William had drawn one up to the bed. He sat down, bending forward a little. One big hand rested on the young man's wrist. "Now, tell me all about it," he said quietly.

The artist raised his eyes with a smile. He drew a deep breath. "Yes —you 've come," he said. "You 've come."

"I 've come," said Uncle William. His big bulk had not stirred. It seemed to fill the room.

The sick man rested in it. His eyes closed. "I 've wanted—you."

Uncle William nodded. "Sick folks get fancies," he said.

"—and I kept seeing you in the fever —and you—" The voice droned away and was still.

Uncle William sat quiet, one hand on the thin wrist. The galloping pulse slowed—and leaped again—and fluttered, and fell at last to even beats. The tense muscles relaxed. The parted lips closed with a half-smile.

Uncle William bent forward, watching it. In the dim light of the room, his face had a kind of gentleness—a kindliness and bigness that watched over the night and reached out beyond it to the ends of the earth.

X

IN the morning the big form was still there. The artist turned to it as he opened his eyes. "You are not gone!"

"Gone? Land, no!" Uncle William sat up from a cat-nap, rubbing his eyes and blinking a little. "I cal'ate to stay quite a spell yet." He stretched his great legs slowly, first one and then the other, as if testing them.

Reproach filled the artist's eyes. "You 've not lain down all night!"

"Did n't need to," said Uncle William. He got to his feet briskly. "I slep' a good deal comin' down in the boat. There wa'n't a great deal goin'

on. If you 've got a little water and soap handy, I reckon I could use it."

The artist half started to get up, but a firm hand held him back. "Now, stay right there. You jest tell me where things be—"

He pointed to a door at the left. "You won't find it in very good order, I 'm afraid."

"Don't you mind." Uncle William had disappeared through the doorway. "It won't bother me a mite." His voice came back sociably. "I'm considabul ust to havin' things mussed up."

The artist lay with a smile, listening to the sounds that came through the half-open door—thumping and blowing and splashing.

Uncle William reappeared with shining face. "It seems good to hev suthin' bigger 'n a teacup to wash in," he

said. "I like the hull ocean, myself, but a tub does putty well. Now, just let me see."

He drew up to the bed, looking at the young man with keen glance.

"Oh, I 'm all right—now."

"Had a fever?"

"A little—yes."

"You all alone?"

"There 's a man comes in by and by. He 'll clean up and get things for me."

Uncle William ignored the pride in the tone. "Jest roll over a little mite. There—" He placed his broad hand under the thin back. "Feel sore there? Kind o' hurts, don't it? I thought so—There." He laid him back gently. "You just wait a minute." He was fumbling at the lock that held his box.

"Are you a doctor?" The young man was watching him with half-amused eyes.

"Well, not a doctor exactly." Uncle William had taken out a small bottle and was holding it up to the light, squinting through it. "But I had a fever once, myself—kep' a-runnin'." He had come over to the bedside, the bottle in his hand. "You got a doctor?"

The young man shook his head. "He will come if I send for him."

Uncle William nodded. "That 's the best kind." He held out the bottle. "I 'd like to give you 'bout five on 'em."

"What are they?"

"Well, that 's what I don't know, but it took about five on 'em to break up mine." He had poured one into the palm of his hand and held it out. It was a small, roughly shaped pill, with grayish surface pitted with black.

The young man eyed it doubtfully.

"It *don't* look very nice," said Uncle William, "and the man that made it never had a stitch of clothes on his back in his life; but I guess you better take it."

The young man opened his lips. The thing slid down, leaving a sickish, sweetish taste behind it.

Uncle William brought him a glass of water. "I know how it tastes, but I reckon it 'll do the work. Now, let 's see." He stood back, surveying the untidy room, a mellow smile on his lips. "'T is kind o' cluttered up," he said. "I 'll jest make a path through." He gathered up a handful of shoes and slippers and thrust them under the bed, drawing the spread down to hide them. The cups and glasses and scattered spoons and knives he bore away to the bath-room, and the artist heard them descending into the tub with a sound

of rushing water. Uncle William returned triumphant. "I 've put 'em a-soak," he explained. The table-spread, with its stumps of cigars, bits of torn papers, and collars and neckties and books and paint-brushes and tubes, he gathered up by the four corners, dumping it into a half-open drawer. He closed the drawer firmly. "Might 's well start fresh." He replaced the spread and stood back, surveying it proudly. "What 's that door?" He pointed across the room.

"It 's your bedroom," said the artist, a little uneasily. "But I don't believe you can get in."

Uncle William approached cautiously. He pushed open the door and looked in. He came back beaming. "The' 's quite a nice lot of room," he said, taking hold of the end of his box and dragging it away.

The artist lay looking about the room with brightening eyes. The window-shades were still askew and there were garments here and there, but Uncle William's path was a success. The sun was coming over the tops of the houses opposite, and Uncle William reappeared with shining face.

"You reelly needed a man around," he said. "I 'm putty glad I come."

"What made you come?" asked the artist.

"What made me?" Uncle William paused, looking about him. "Where 's my spectacles? Must 'a' left 'em in there." He disappeared once more.

While the artist was waiting for him to return he dozed again, and when he opened his eyes, Uncle William was standing by the bed with a cup of something hot. He slipped a hand under the young man's head, raising it while he drank.

The artist took his time—in slow, surprised sips. "It 's good!" he said. He released the cup slowly.

Uncle William nodded. "I 've been overhaulin' your locker a little."

"You did n't find *that* in it." The artist motioned to the cup.

"Well—all but a drop or two," said Uncle William, setting it down. "A' drop o' suthin' hot 'll make 'most anything tasty, I reckon. I 'll go out and stock up pretty soon."

A slow color had come into the artist's face. He turned it away. "I don't need much," he said.

"No more 'n a robin," said Uncle William, cheerfully; "but I can't live on bird-seed myself. I reckon I 'll lay in suthin'—two-three crackers, mebbe, enough to make a chowder."

The young man laughed out. "I feel better," he declared.

"It 's a good pill," said Uncle Wil-

liam. "Must be 'most time for another." He pulled out his great watch. "Just about." He doled out the pill with careful hand.

The young man looked at the bottle. "You have n't many left?"

"Eight more," said Uncle William, rapping the cork into place. "That 'lows for one more fever for me afore I die—I don't cal'ate to have but one more." He looked about for his hat. "I 'm goin' out a little while," he said, settling it on his head.

"Wait a minute, Uncle William." The young man stretched out his hand. "How did you come to know I needed you?"

Uncle William took the hand in his, patting it slowly. "Why, that was nateral enough," he said. "When Sergia wrote me, sayin' you was sick—"

"Sergia wrote you?" The young man had turned away his eyes. "She should not have done it. She had no right—"

"Why not?" said Uncle William. He seated himself by the bed. There was something keen in the glance of his blue eyes. "You 're goin' to be married, ain't you?"

The head on the pillow turned uneasily. "No—not now."

"Why not?"

"I shall never be able to take care of her."

"Shucks!" said Uncle William. "Let her take care of you, then."

The tears of weakness came into the young man's eyes.

Uncle William's gaze was fixed on space. "You 've been foolish," he said—"turrible foolish. I don't doubt she wants to marry you this minute."

"She shall not do it." He spoke almost fiercely.

"There, there," said Uncle William, soothingly, "I would n't make such a fuss about it. Nobody 's goin' to marry you 'thout you want 'em to. You jest quiet down and go to sleep. We 'll talk it over when I come back."

XI

WHEN he returned the artist was awake. His eyes had a clearer look.

Uncle William surveyed them over the top of his parcels. "Feelin' better?" he said.

"Yes."

He carried the parcels into the next room, and the artist heard him pottering around and humming. He came out presently in his shirt-sleeves. His spectacles were mounted on the gray tufts. "I 've got a chowder goin'," he said. "You take another pill and then you 'll be about ready to eat some of it, when it 's done."

"Can I eat chowder?" The tone was dubious, but meek.

"You 've got all your teeth, hain't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I guess you can eat it."

"I have n't been eating much."

"I should n't think you had." Uncle William spoke dryly. "You need n't be a mite afraid o' one o' my chowders. A baby could eat 'em, if it had got its teeth."

The artist ate the chowder, when it came, and called for more, but Uncle William refused him sternly. "You just wait awhile," he said, bearing away the empty plate. "There ain't more 'n enough for a comfortable dish for me. You don't want to eat it all, do you?"

"No," said the artist, flushing.

"I thought not." It took Uncle William a long time to eat his portion, and the artist fell asleep again, watching

the rhythmic motion of the great jaw as it went slowly back and forth.

When he wakened again it was almost dark in the room. Uncle William sat by the window, looking down into the street. He came across to the bed as the artist stirred. "You 've had a good long sleep." He laid a hand on the moist forehead. "That 's good. Fever 's gone."

"It will come back. It always does." There was anxious dread in the tone.

"It won't this time." Uncle William sat nodding at him mildly. "I know how you feel—kind o' scared to believe anything—anything that 's good."

The artist smiled. "*You* never felt that way!"

"Just that way," said Uncle William. "I did n't *want* to believe I wa'n't al'ays goin' to be sick. I kep'

kind o' thinkin' I'd ruther be sick 'n not—jest as if the devil had me."

"Yes"—the young man spoke almost eagerly—"it 's the way I 've been! Only I did n't know it till you said so."

"The' 's a good many things we don't know—not jest exactly know—till somebody says 'em."

They sat quiet, listening to the hum from the street.

"I 've done some queer things," said the artist.

"Like enough." Uncle William did not ask what they were.

"They begin to look foolish." He turned his head a little.

"Do you good—best thing in the world."

"I don't see how I *could*." The tone was uneasy. "I must have been beastly to her."

Uncle William said nothing.

"She did n't tell you?" The artist was looking at him.

"She? Lord, no! women don't tell anything you 've done to 'em—not if it 's anything bad."

"I might have known. . . . I fairly turned her out. But she kept coming back. She wanted me to marry her, so she could stay and take care of me." He was not looking at Uncle William.

"And you would n't let her?"

"I could n't.—There was no money," he said at last.

Uncle William glanced about him in the clear dusk. "Comf'tabul place," he said.

The artist flushed. "She pays the rent, I suppose. They would have turned me out long since. I have n't asked, but I know she pays it. There is no one else."

"She is rich, probably," said Uncle William.

"Rich?" The young man smiled bitterly. "She has what she earns. She works day and night. If she should stop, there would be nothing for either of us."

"Not unless suthin' come in," said Uncle William. "Suthin' might come in.—You 'd kind o' like to see her, would n't you?"

The artist held out a hand as if to stop him. "Not till I can pay her back, every cent!"

"Guess you need another pill, likely," said Uncle William. He got up in the dark and groped about for the bottle. His great form loomed large above the bed as he handed it to the young man. "That 's four," he said soothingly. "Jest about one more 'll fix ye."

The young man swallowed it almost grudgingly. He lay back upon the pillow. "I can pay her the money sometime." His gaunt eyes were staring into the dark. "But I can never make up to her for the way I treated her."

"Mebbe she did n't mind," said Uncle William, non-committally. "Sometimes they don't."

"Mind? She could n't help minding. I was a fiend to her. I did everything but strike her."

A smile grew, out of the dark, in Uncle William's face. "I was thinkin' about that ol' chief," he said slowly—"the one that give me the pills. I treated him—why, I treated him wuss 'n anything. 'Course, he wa'n't like white folks; but I was fightin' crazy with the fever, not sick enough to go to bed, but jest sittin' around and jawin' at things. I dunno *how* he come to

take such a likin' to me. Might 'a' been on account o' my size—we was about the same build. I 'd set and jaw at him, callin' him names.—Don't suppose he understood half of 'em, but he could see plain enough I was spittin' mad. He 'd kind o' edge up to me, grinnin' like and noddin', and fust thing I knew, one day, he 'd fetched a pill and made me take it. I was mad enough to 'a' killed him easy, but 'fore I could get up to do it, I fell asleep somehow. And when I woke up I felt different. *You* feel different, don't you?"

The artist smiled through the soft dark. "I would like to get down on my knees."

Uncle William smoothed the spread in place. "They 'd feel kind o' sharp, I guess. I would n't try it—not yet. You wait till Sergia comes."

"*Will* she come?"

"She 'd come to-night if she knew you wanted her. You go to sleep, and in the mornin' you 'll take that other pill." He lifted the pillow and turned it over, patting it in place. "Why, that old chief he was so glad when he see me feelin' better he acted kind o' crazy-like. I held out my hand to him when I woke up; but he did n't know anything about shakin' hands. He jest got down and took my feet and hugged 'em. It made me feel queer," said Uncle William. "You do feel queer when you hain't acted jest right."

XII

"CAN I see her to-day?" It was the first question in the morning.

"You better?"

"Yes."

"You feelin' well enough to sit up?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, you can stay where you be another day." Uncle William smiled cheerfully.

"Can I see her?"

"We 'll see about that. I 've got a good many things to tend to." Uncle William bustled away.

After a time his head was thrust in the door. "I 'll go see her, myself, byme-by," he said kindly. "Mebbe she 'll come back with me."

"It 's too late now." The artist spoke a little bitterly.

"Too late!" Uncle William came out, reproachful and surprised. "What d' you mean?"

"It 's quarter to nine. She goes to work at nine. She has pupils—she teaches all day."

Uncle William's face dropped a little. "That 's too bad now, ain't it! But don't you mind. I wa'n't jest certain I 'd let you see her to-day, anyhow."

"When can I?"

Uncle William pondered. "You 're in a good deal of a hurry, ain't you?"

"I want to tell her—"

"Yes, yes, I know.—Well,—'bout tomorrow. How 'd that do?"

"You could send her a note," said the artist.

"I 'm goin' to see her," said Uncle

William. "She'll be to home this evenin', won't she?"

"Yes."

"I 'll go see her."

The artist looked doubtful.

"Can't I go see her?" said Uncle William.

"I was wondering whether you could find the way."

"H'm-m. Where 'd you say it was?"

"Eighteenth Street, near Broadway."

"Eighteenth? That 's somewheres between Seventeenth and Nineteenth, ain't it?" said Uncle William, dryly.

"Yes." The artist smiled faintly.

Uncle William nodded. "I thought so. And I don't suppose they 've changed the lay of Broadway a gre' deal?"

"No—not much."

"Well, I reckon I can find it. I gen'-

ally do; and I can't get far out o' the way with this." He touched the compass that hung from the fob of the great watch. "I 've been putty much all over the world with that. I reckon it 'll p'int about the same in New York as it does in Arichat. Now, I 've got your breakfast 'most ready, but I can't seem to remember about your coffee.—You take sugar and milk in it, don't you?"

"Yes." The tone was almost sulky.

Uncle William looked at him shrewdly over his spectacles. "I don't believe you feel well enough to see anybody for a good while, do you?"

The artist's face changed subtly—like a child's. It was almost cheerful.

Uncle William laughed out. "That 's better—a little mite better. I guess 'bout day after to-morrow you 'll do to see company."

The young man stretched out a hand. "I *must* see her. I shall get up—"

"There, there. I would n't try to get up if I was you," said Uncle William, genially. "I 've put away your clothes, different places. I don't jest know where they be, myself. It 'll be quite a chore to get 'em all together. You jest lie still, and let me manage."

The young man ate his breakfast with relish. A subtle resolve to get up and do things was in his eye.

Uncle William watched it, chuckling. "Sha'n't be able to keep him there more 'n a day longer," he said. "Better feed him well whilst I can." He prepared clam-broth and toast, and wondered about an omelet, rolling in and out of the room with comfortable gait.

The artist ate everything that was set before him, eagerly. The resolve in

his eye yielded to appreciation. "You ought to have been a chef, Uncle William. I never tasted anything better than that." He was eating a last bit of toast, searching with his fork for stray crumbs.

Uncle William nodded. "The' 's a good many things I 'd o't to 'a' been if I 'd had time. That 's the trouble with livin'. You don't hev time. You jest practise a day or two on suthin'—get kind o' ust to it—and then you up and have to do suthin' else. I like cookin' fust rate while I 'm doin' it. . . . I dunno as I *should* like it reg'lar, though. It 'd be kind o' fiddlin' work, gettin' up and makin' omelets every mornin'."

"You 're an artist," said the young man.

"Mebbe. Don't you think you 've licked that plate about clean?" Uncle William looked at it approvingly. "It

ain't much work to wash dishes for you."

At intervals during the day the artist demanded his clothes, each time a little more vigorously. Uncle William put him off. "I don't see that picter of my house anywheres 'round," he said once when pressed too close.

"No."

"You sent it off?"

"Yes." The young man was silent a minute. "Sergia took them—all of them—when I fell sick. They were not ready—not even framed. She was to send them to the committee. I have not heard."

"I 'll go see 'em in the mornin'," said Uncle William.

"I don't know that you can—"

"Can't anybody go in—if it 's an exhibit—by payin' suthin'?"

"I mean, I don't know that they 're hung."

"Well, I would n't bother about that. I 'd like to see 'em jest as well if they ain't hung. I 'm putty tall, but I can scooch down as well as anybody. It 'll seem kind o' good to see the old place. I was thinkin' this mornin' I wish't there was two-three rocks round somewheres. I guess that 's what picters are for. Some folks *hev* to live in New York—can't *get* away. I sha'n't mind if they ain't hung up. I can see 'em all right, scoochin' a little."

The young man smiled. "I don't know that they 're accepted."

"Why not—if she sent 'em?"

"Oh, she sent them all right. They may have been refused."

"At an exhibit?"

"Yes."

"Well, up our way we don't do like

that. We take everything that comes in—pies and pickles and bedquilts and pumpkins and everything; putty triflin' stuff, some of it, but they take it.—This is different, I s'pose?"

"A little. Yes. They only take the best—or what they call the best." The tone was bitter.

Uncle William looked at him mildly. "Then they took yourn—every one on 'em. They was as good picters as I ever see."

The artist's face lightened a little. "They *were* good." His thought dwelt on them lovingly.

Uncle William slipped quietly away to his room. The artist heard him moving about, opening and shutting bureau drawers, humming gently and fussing and talking in broken bits. Time passed. It was growing dark in the room.

The artist turned a little impatiently. "Hallo there!"

Uncle William stuck out his head. "Want suthin'?"

"What are you doing?" said the artist. It was almost querulous.

Uncle William came out, smoothing his neckerchief. It was a new one, blue like the sky. "I was fixin' up a little to go see her. Do I look to suit you?" He moved nearer in the dusk with a kind of high pride. The tufts of hair stood erect on his round head, the neckerchief had a breezy knot with fluttering ends, and the coat hung from his great shoulders like a sail afloat.

The artist looked him over admiringly. "You 're great!" he said. "How did you come to know enough not to change?"

"I 've changed everything!" de-

clared Uncle William. His air of pride drooped a little.

The artist laughed out. "I mean you kept your same kind of clothes. A good many people, when they come down here to New York, try to dress like other folks—get new things."

Uncle William's face cleared. He looked down his great bulk with a smile. "I like my own things," he said. "I feel to home in 'em."

XIII

NCLE WILLIAM found the door of the studio, and bent to examine the card tacked on the panel. "Sergia Lvova, Teacher of Piano and Violin."

He knocked gently.

"Come in." The call came clear and straight.

Uncle William opened the door.

A girl sat at a table across the room, her eyes protected by a green shade from the lamp that burned near and threw its light on the page she was copying. She glanced up as the door opened and pushed up the green shade, looking out from under it inquiringly. She peered a moment and then sprang up, thrust-

ing aside the shade with a quick turn. "I am so glad you 've come." She crossed the room, holding out her hands. There was something clear and fresh in the motion—like a free creature, out of doors.

Uncle William stood smiling at her. "How do you know it 's me?" he said.

The girl laughed quietly. "There could n't be two." Her voice had a running, musical quality, with deep notes in it and a little accent that caught at the words, tripping them lightly. She had taken his hands with a swift movement and was holding them, looking at him earnestly. "You are just as he said," she nodded.

Uncle William returned the look. The upturned face flushed a little, but it did not fall. He put out his hand and touched it. "Some like a flower," he said, "as near as I can make out—in

the dark." He looked about the huge, bare room, with its single flame shining on the page.

She moved away and lighted a gas-jet on the wall, and then another. She faced about, smiling. "Will that do?"

Uncle William nodded. "I like a considabul light," he said.

"Yes." She drew forward a chair. "Sit down."

She folded her hands lightly, still scanning him. Uncle William settled his frame in the big chair. His glance traveled about the room. The two gas-jets flared at dark corners. A piano emerged mistily. Music-racks sketched themselves on the blackness. The girl's face was the only bit of color. It glowed like a red flower, out of the gloom. Uncle William's glance came back to it. "I got your letter all right," he said.

"I knew you would come."

"Yes." He was searching absently in his pocket. He drew out the bluish slip of paper with rough edge. He handed it to her gravely. "I could n't take that, my dear, you know."

She put it aside on the table. "I thought you might not have money enough to come at once, and he needed you."

"Yes, he needed me. He 's better."

Her face lightened. The rays of color awoke and played in it. "You have cured him."

"Well,"—Uncle William was judicious,—"I give him a pill."

She laughed out. "He needed *you*," she said.

"Did he?" Uncle William leaned forward. "I never had anybody need me—not reelly need me." His tone confided it to her.

She looked back at him. "I should think every one would."

He looked a little puzzled. "I dunno. But I see, from the way you wrote, that *he* did, so I come right along."

"He will get well now."

"He was middlin' discouraged," said Uncle William.

"He could n't see anything the way it is." Her face had flushed a little, but the light in her eyes was clear.

Uncle William met it. "You showed a good deal of sense," he said.

The face, as she pushed back the hair from it, looked tired. "I had to think for two."

Uncle William nodded. "He wants to see you."

She mused over it. "Do you think I 'd better?"

"No," said Uncle William, promptly.

Her lips remained parted. "Not to-

morrow?" she said. Her lips closed on the word gently.

"Not for a considabul spell." Uncle William shook his head. "He ain't acted right."

"He was ill."

"He was sick," admitted Uncle William, "—some. But it was some cussedness, too. That ain't the main thing though." Uncle William leaned nearer. "He 'll get well faster if he has suthin' to kind o' pester him."

She looked at him with open eyes.

"It 's the way men be," said Uncle William. "The Lord knew how 't was, I reckon, when he made 'em. He had n't more 'n got 'em done, 'fore he made wimmen." He beamed on her genially. "He 'll get well a good deal faster if the' 's suthin' he thinks he wants and can't have."

"Yes.—How will you keep him

away?" A little twinkle sounded in her voice.

"I 'll take him home with me," said Uncle William, "up to Arichat."

"Now?"

"Well, in a day or two—soon 's it 's safe. It 'll do him good to be up there. It 'd do anybody good." His face grew wistful. "If you jest see it once, the way it is, you 'd know what I mean: kind o' big sweeps,"—he waved his arm over acres of moor,—"an' a good deal o' sky—room enough for clouds, sizable ones, and wind. You 'd o't to hear our wind." He paused, helpless, before the wind. He could not convey it.

"I *have* heard it."

He stared at her. "You been there?"

"I 've seen it, I mean—in Alan's pictures."

"Oh, them!" His tone reduced them

to mere art. But a thought hung on it. "Where be they?" he asked.

"At the 'Exhibition of American Artists.'" It was the tone of sheer pride.

"They took 'em, did they?" said William.

"They could n't help it. They sent back one for lack of room, but he will have four hung."

"That 's good. You have n't told him?"

"I only heard an hour ago, and I had copying to finish. I have a little recital, of my pupils, this evening. I was planning to write the letter and mail it on the way out."

Uncle William started up. "I 'm hinderin' ye."

"No—please." She had forced him back gently. "I shall not have to write the letter now. Tell me about him." Her face was alight.

Uncle William considered. "The' ain't much to tell, I guess. He 's gettin' better. He 's actin' the way men gen'ally do."

"Yes—?" Her voice sang a little. "And he wants to see me?"

"Wust way," said Uncle William; "but he ain't goin' to. What was you copyin' when I come in?"

"Some music—for one of the big houses. It helps out."

Uncle William was looking at her thoughtfully. "He 'd better give up his place when we go," he said. "He 'll, like enough, stay with me all summer."

"His rooms, you mean?" She mused a little. "Yes, perhaps—"

"They must cost a good deal," said Uncle William.

"They do." She paused a minute. "He is almost sure to take a prize,"

she said. "It 's the best work he has done."

"That 'll be good," said Uncle William. "But we won't count too much on it. He won't need money in Arichat. A little goes a long ways up there. Good night." He was holding out his hand.

She placed hers in it slowly. Uncle William lifted the slim fingers. He patted them benignly. "They don't look good for much, but they 're pretty," he said.

She laughed out quietly. "They have to be," she said. "They 're my tools. I *have* to be careful of them. That is one of the things we quarreled about—Alan and I. He knew I ought not to use them and he would n't let me do things for him, and he would n't have a nurse, nor go to the hospital." She sighed a little. "He was very obstinate."

"Jest like a mule," assented Uncle William. He was stroking the fingers gently. "But he 's got a new driver this time." He chuckled a little.

She looked up quickly. "Has he consented to go?"

"Well, we 're goin'.—It comes to the same thing I reckon," said Uncle William. He was looking at the dark face with the darker lines beneath the eyes. "You 'll have an easier time," he said. "It 's been putty hard on you."

"Oh, I don't mind," quickly, "—only the misunderstandings—and the quarrels—"

"That was the fever," said Uncle William.

"But *I* did n't have the fever," said the girl. "I might have been patient."

"Well, I reckon the 'Angil Gabriel himself 'd quarrel with a man that had one of them intermittent fevers," said

the old man, thoughtfully. "They 're powerful tryin'. You feel better—a little—and you perk up and think you 're goin' to get well, and then, fust thing you know, there you are—all to do over again. If I had my ch'ice of all the diseases in the calendar, that 's the one I *would n't* take. Some on 'em you hev the comfort of knowin' you 'll die of 'em—if ye live long enough." He chuckled a little. "But this one, ye can't die and ye can't get well."

"But *he* is going to get well?" The girl's eyes held him.

"Yes, he 'll be all right if he can set out in the wind a spell—and the sun. The fever 's broke. What he wants now is plenty to eat and good company. You 'll be comin' up to see us bymeby, mebbe?" He looked at her hopefully.

"Do you think I could?"

"Well, I dunno why not. He 'll be gettin' restless in a month or so. You might as well be married up there as anywhere. We 've got a good minister —a fust-rate one."

She smiled a little wistfully. "He won't have me," she said.

"Shucks!" said Uncle William. "You come up, and if he don't marry you, I will."

A bell sounded somewhere. She started. "I must go." A thought crossed her face. "I wonder if you would like it—the recital?" She was looking at him, an amused question in her eyes.

"Is it speaking pieces?" said Uncle William, cautiously.

"Playing them, and singing—one or two. It 's a musicale, you know. You might like it—" She was still thinking, her forehead a little wrinkled.

"They are nice girls and— Oh—!" the forehead suddenly lifted, "you *would* like it. There are sea-pieces—MacDowell's. They 're just the thing.—" She held him hospitably.—"Do come. You would be sure to enjoy it."

"Like enough," said Uncle William. "It takes all kinds of singing to make a world. I might like 'em fust-rate. And it won't take long?"

"No—only an hour or two. You can leave *him*, can't you?" The pretty forehead had wrinkled again.

"Easy as not," said Uncle William. "Best thing for him. He 'll have a chanct to miss me a little."

She smiled at him reproachfully. "We 'll have to hurry, I 'm afraid. It 's only a step. But we ought to go at once."

Uncle William followed in her wake, admiring the quick, lithe movements of

the tall figure. Now that the flower-like face was turned away, she seemed larger, more vigorous. "A regular clipper, and built for all kinds of weather," said Uncle William as he followed fast. "I would n't be afraid to trust her anywheres. She 'd reef down quick in a blow." He chuckled to himself.

She looked around. "Here we are."

XIV.

THEY had paused at the foot of a flight of stairs. Down the narrow hall-way floated a mingled sound of voices, high and low, with drifting strains of violin-bows laid across strings and quickly withdrawn.

The old man looked at her inquiringly. "They hain't begun?"

She shook her head. "They 're tuning up."

His face lifted a little. "I reckoned that could n't be the beginnin'. But ye can't al'ays tell. They make queer noises sometimes."

"Yes.—I must leave you now." She had ushered him into a small hall.

"I 'm going to have you sit here, quite near the platform, where I can see you." She looked at him a little anxiously. "You don't need to stay if you don't like it, you know."

"Oh, I shall like it fust-rate," he responded. "It looks like a real comf'tabul chair to set in."

He seated himself in it and beamed upon the room. The place she had selected for him was near the platform and facing a little toward the audience. It had occurred to her, in a last moment of indecision, that Uncle William might enjoy the audience if the music proved too classic for him. She left him with a little murmur of apology.

A young girl in pink chiffon, with a bunch of huge pink roses, fluttered forward with a program.

Uncle William took it in pleased fingers. He searched for his spectacles

and mounted them on his nose, staring at the printed lines. The audience had settled down to attention. Amused glances traveled toward the big figure absorbed in its program. Sergia had whispered a word here and there as she left the room. It made its way back through the crowd—"A friend of Mademoiselle Lvova's—a sea-captain. She has brought him to hear the MacDowell pieces." The audience smiled and relaxed. The music was beginning. Two young girls played a concerto from Rubenstein, with scared, flying fingers. They were relieved when it was done, and the audience clapped long and loud. Some one brought them bunches of flowers—twin lilies, tied exactly alike, with long white ribbons. Uncle William, his spectacles pushed up on the tufts of hair, watched with admiring glance as they escaped from the

stage. He turned to his right-hand neighbor, an old gentleman with white hair and big, smooth, soft hands, who had watched the performance with gentle care.

"Putty girls," said Uncle William, cordially.

The man looked at him, smiling. "One of them is my granddaughter, sir," he responded affably.

She came from the door by the platform and sat down near her grandfather, the lilies and the long white ribbons trailing from nervous fingers. Uncle William leaned forward and smiled at her, nodding encouragement.

She replied with a quick, shy smile and fixed her eyes on the platform.

More pupils followed—young girls and old ones, and a youth with a violin that fluttered and wailed and grew harmonious at last as the youth forgot him-

self. Uncle William's big, round face beamed upon him. Sergia, watching him from behind the scenes, could see that he regarded them all as nice children. He would have looked the same had they played on jews'-harps and tin horns. But he was enjoying it. She was glad of that.

She came out during the intermission to speak with him. "They 're all through now," she said encouragingly.

He looked down at his program bewildered, and a little disappointed, she thought. "They got 'em all done?—I did n't hear that 'Wanderin' Iceberg' one," he said regretfully. "I cal'ated to listen to that. But I was so interested in the children that I clean forgot.—They 're nice children." He looked about the room where they were laughing and talking in groups. "Time to go, is it?"

"Not yet. That was only the first half—the pupils' half. The rest is what I wanted you to hear—the sea-pieces and the others. They are played by real musicians."

"You goin' to do one?" asked Uncle William.

"Yes, one." She smiled at him.

"I 'll stay." He settled back comfortably.

"That 's right. I must go now and speak to some of the mothers. They only come for the first half. They will be going home." She moved away.

Uncle William's eyes followed her admiringly. He turned to the old gentleman beside him. "Nice girl," he said.

"She is a fine teacher," responded the old gentleman. "She has not been here long, but she has a good following. She has temperament."

"Has she?" Uncle William looked after her a little quizzically. "Makes 'em stand around, does she? You can't ever tell about temper. Sometimes it 's the quietest ones has the wust. But she makes 'em work good. Ye can see that."

"Yes, she makes them work." The old gentleman smiled upon him kindly and patronizingly. He had been born and brought up in New York. He was receptive to new ideas and people. There was something about Uncle William—a subtle tang—that he liked. It was a new flavor.

Uncle William studied his program. "Sounds more sensible 'n some of it." He had laid a big finger on a section near the end. "I can understand that, now, 'To an Old White Pine.' That 's interestin'. Now that one there." He spelled out the strange sounds slowly, "'Opus 6, No. 2, A minor, All-e-gro.'

Now mebbe *you* know what that means —*I* don't. But an ol' white-pine tree—anybody can see that. We don't hev 'em up my way—pine-trees. But I like 'em—al'ays did—al'ays set under 'em when they 're handy. You don't hev many round here?"

The old gentleman smiled. "No; there are not many old white pines in New York. I can remember a few, as a boy."

"Can ye?—Right in the center here?" Uncle William was interested.

"Well, not just here—a little out. But they 're gone." The old gentleman sighed. "MacDowell has caught the spirit. You can hear the wind soughing through them and the branches creaking a little and rubbing, and a still kind of light all around. It 's very nice."

"Good poetry, I suppose," assented

Uncle William. "I don't care so much for poetry myself. Some on it 's good," he added thoughtfully. " 'The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck,' that swings off kind o' nice, and 'Horatius at the Bridge.' But most on it has a kind o' travelin' round way with it—has to go round by Robin Hood's barn to get anywheres. I 'm gen'ally sort o' drowsy whilst it 's bein' read."

The old gentleman had laughed out genially. "MacDowell does n't write poetry, except short things—lines for headings. He makes it on the piano."

"Makes an old white-pine tree?" demanded Uncle William.

"Well—something like that."

Uncle William returned to his program. "There 'll be a 'water-lily,' then, will the'? and an 'eagle,' and a 'medder brook,' and a 'wanderin' iceberg,' and a 'pair o' bars'?" He looked up with

a swift twinkle. "And like enough a rooster or two, and a knock-kneed horse. I keep a-wonderin' what that wanderin' iceberg 'll be like. I 've *seen* a wanderin' iceberg,—leastways I 've come mighty near one,—but I ain't ever *heard* it. You ever met a wanderin' iceberg?" His tone was friendly and solicitous.

The New York man shook his head. "Only the human kind."

Uncle William chuckled. "I 've met that kind myself—and the other kind, too." He paused suddenly. The audience had hushed itself. Sergia was seated at the piano.

It was a Beethoven number, a sonata. Uncle William apparently went to sleep. Sergia, watching him, smiled gently. He must be very tired, poor dear. The next number will keep him awake all right. It did. It was sung

by the famous baritone—"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest! Yo ho! Yo ho!" Uncle William sat up. Joy radiated from him. He clutched his chair with both hands and beamed. The audience laughed with delight and clapped an encore.

"Goin' to do it again, is he?" said Uncle William. "Now that 's good of him, ain't it? But I should think he 'd kind o' like to. I 'd like to do it myself if I could."

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest!" rolled out the voice.

"He gets the spirit of it," said the old gentleman when the song had ended and the applause had subsided.

"Jest so. I 've been there myself—come within an ace o' havin' *my* chest set on once. They was all fightin' drunk, too—jest like that. Gives ye the same kind o' feelin's—creepy and shiv-

ery-like.—What 's *he* goin' to do?" A long-haired youth had appeared on the platform. He approached the piano and stood looking at it thoughtfully, his head a little to one side.

"It 's Flanders. He plays the MacDowell—the 'Wandering Iceberg,' you know."

"H'm-m." Uncle William took down his spectacles to look at the youth through them. "You think he can do it all right? He ain't very hefty."

The youth had seated himself. He struck a heavy, thundering chord on the keys and subsided. His hands hung relaxed at his sides and his eyes were fixed dreamily on the wall before him.

"Has he got her started?" It was a loud whisper from Uncle William.

The old gentleman shook his head.

Uncle William waited patiently. There was a gentle trickle on the keys

—and another. Then a pause and more trickles—then some galloping notes, with heavy work in the bass.

Uncle William looked interested. "She 's gettin' under way, like enough."

"Sh-h!" The old gentleman held up a hand.

There were some long, flowing lines and a swirling sound that might have been water, and low growls in the bass, and a general rumbling and gritting and sliding and tumbling among the notes. The sounds stopped altogether. The youth sat staring before him. Applause broke from the audience. The youth got up and left the platform.

Uncle William stared after him with open mouth. "Has he got her done?" He turned to the man at his side.

"All done. How did you like it?"

"Well"—Uncle William squinted thoughtfully at his program—"I thought I was goin' to like it fust-rate—if he 'd got to it."

"He did n't get there, then?" The man laughed.

"Not to the iceberg." Uncle William shook his head. A kindly look grew in his face. "I dunno 's he 's so much to blame, though. An iceberg must be kind o' hard to do, I should think likely."

"*I* should think it might be. Music is n't cold enough."

"'T ain't the cold," said Uncle William, hastily. "I run acrost an iceberg once. We was skirmishin' round up North, in a kind o' white fog, frosty-like, and cold—cold as blazes; and all of a sudden we was on her—close by her, somewheres, behind the frost. We wa' n't cold any more. It was about the

hottest time I ever knew," he said thoughtfully.

"What happened?"

Uncle William roused himself. "Well, after a spell we knew she wa'n't there any more, and we cooled down some. But we wa'n't real cold—not for much as a day or so."

The youth had returned to the piano. The audience met him with wild applause, half-way, and he bowed solemnly from his hips. There was a weary look in his face.

Uncle William looked him over critically. "He don't more 'n half like it, does he?"

The other man coughed a little. Then he laughed out.

Uncle William smiled genially. "I 've seen his kind—a good many times. Look 's if they was goin' to cry when you was feedin' 'em sugar. They

gen'ally like it real well, too."—He consulted his program.—"Goin' to do a hammock, is he?"

The hammock began to sway, and Uncle William's big head rocked softly in time to it. "Some like it," he said when it was done; "not enough to make you sea-sick—jest easy swingin'."

The youth had not left the piano. He played "The Bars at Sunset," and "A Water Lily," and "The Eagle," and then the two sea pieces. Uncle William listened with mild attention.

When it was over and the audience had begun to disperse, Sergia came out. She approached Uncle William, scanning his face. "How did you like it?"

"They all done?" he demanded.

"Yes. Did you like the sea pieces?"

"I liked 'em. Yes—I liked 'em." Uncle William's tone was moderate.

Sergia was smiling at him a little.

"The 'Depths of the Ocean'—you liked that best, did n't you?"

Uncle William looked guilty. "I knew you was goin' to ask me about that one," he said, "and I 'd meant to listen hard—real hard—to it. I hain't ever been quite so far down as that, but I thought mebbe I could gauge it. But you see,"—his tone grew confidential and a little apologetic,—"when they got that far along, I could n't really tell which was which. I wa'n't *plumb* sure whether it was the eagle he was doin' or the dep'hs, and it mixed me up some. I did n't jest know whether to soar up aloft or dive considabul deep. It kep' me kind o' teeterin' betwixt and between—" He looked at her appealingly, yet with a little twinkle somewhere below.

"I see." Sergia's face was dancing. "The names *do* help."

"That 's it," said Uncle William, gallantly. "If he 'd 'a' read off the names, or stopped quite a spell between the pieces, I 'd 'a' done fust-rate. He was playin' 'em nice. I could see the folks liked 'em." He smiled at her kindly.

Sergia smiled back. "Yes, they like MacDowell. They think they understand him—when they know which it is." Her smile had grown frank, like a boy's. "But which did you like best of all?"

"Of the hull thing?" he demanded. He looked down at his program. "They was all nice," he said slowly—"real nice. I dunno when I 've heard nicer singin' 'n playin'. But I reckon that one was about the nicest of the lot." He laid his big thumb on a number.

Sergia and the old gentleman bent to look. It was the Beethoven sonata.

Sergia glanced at the old gentleman. He met the glance, smiling. "A tribute to our hostess," he said.

"A tribute to Beethoven," returned Sergia. Then, after a moment, she laughed softly. Sergia was not addicted to MacDowell.

XV

UNCLE WILLIAM crept into the rooms like a thief, but the artist was sleeping soundly. He did not stir as the latch gave a little click in the lock. "That 's good," said Uncle William. He had slipped off his shoes and was in his stocking feet. He stole over to the bed and stood looking down at the thin face. It was a little drawn, with hollow eyes. "He 'll perk considabul when he hears about them picters," said Uncle William.

But in the morning when, after breakfast, Uncle William announced his great news, the artist ignored it. "Is she coming—Sergia?"

Uncle William scowled his forehead in recollection. "Now, I can't seem to remember 't she said so."

"What *did* she say?" The tone was imperative.

"Well, she asked how you was gettin' along. I told her that—as well as I could."

"Did n't you tell her I wanted to see her?"

"Yes, I told her that." Uncle William's voice was impartial.

"Well?"

"She did n't seem to think much of it. I guess if I was you I 'd hurry up and get well so 's 't I could go see *her*."

The artist's face had grown hard. "I shall not go until I can carry her the money in my hand—all that I owe her."

"Is 't a good deal?" asked Uncle William.

But the artist had turned his face to the wall.

Uncle William looked down at him with a kind of compassionate justice. "If I was you—"

A whistle sounded and an arm, holding a letter, was thrust in at the door.

"What is it?" The artist had turned. He half raised himself, reaching out a hand. "What is it? Give it to me."

Uncle William examined the lines slowly. "Why, it seems to be for me," he said kindly. "I dunno anybody that 'd be writin' to me."

He found his glasses and opened it, studying the address once or twice and shaking his head.

The artist had sunk back, indifferent.

"Why!" The paper rustled in Uncle William's hand. He looked up. "She 's gone!" he said.

The artist started up, glaring at him.

Uncle William shook his head, looking at him pityingly. "Like as not we sha'n't see her again, ever."

The artist's hand groped. "What is it?" he whispered.

"She 's gone—left in the night."

"She will come back." The gaunt eyes were fixed on his face.

Uncle William shook his head again, returning the gaze with a kind of sternness. "I dunno," he says. "When a man treats her like Andy has, she must kind o' hate him—like pizen."

The artist sat up, a look of hope, faint and perplexed, dawning beneath his stare. He leaned forward, speaking slowly. "What are you talking about?"

"I 'm talkin' about that." Uncle William held out the letter. "It 's from Andy, and Juno 's left him. Took

to the woods. She could n't stan' havin' him round, I guess." Uncle William chuckled a little.

The young man lay back. He moistened his lips a little with his tongue. "You were talking about *her?*" The words were a whisper.

Uncle William looked at him over his glasses. "Did n't you hear me say so?"

There was a long silence. "I thought you meant—Sergia."

"Sergia?—What!" Uncle William looked down at the letter. A light dawned slowly in his eye. He fixed it on the young man. A chuckle sounded somewhere and grew in little rolls, tumbling up from the depths. "You thought I meant—her!" Uncle William's sides shook gently. "Lord, no! Sergia ain't run away. She 'll stan'

by till the last man 's hung. She 's that kind."

"I know." The tone was jealous. "I ought to know."

"Yes, you ought to know." Uncle William left the moral to take care of itself. He did up the work, singing hopefully as he rolled about the room, giving things what he called "a lick and a promise."

"You were late last night," said the artist, watching him.

"Yes, considabul late," said Uncle William. He had come upon another pile of cigar-ashes behind a picture on the shelf, and was brushing it up, whistling softly. "You must 'a' smoked a good deal," he said, rapping out the ashes. "I 've been sweepin' 'em up ever since I come."

"I did. It helped me forget."

"It did n't help you get well, I reckon," said Uncle William. "What you need," he added, "is fresh air and wind—and rocks."

The artist mused. "It would seem good."

The old man had paused in his work. "Will you go—to-morrow?"

The artist looked about him, hesitating. "I could n't get ready—"

"*I 'll* get ye ready."

"We might—in a week?"

"I can't wait," said Uncle William, decisively. "I 've got to look up Juno. She 'll like enough get desperate—drown herself the first thing I know. *I 'm* goin' to start to-morrow. If you want to go along, I 'll pack ye up."

The young man looked at him helplessly. "I can't get along without you. You know I need you."

"Yes, I know you need me," said

Uncle William. "I kind o' counted on that." He began to pack vigorously, emerging now and then out of the dust and clatter to beam on the young man. "Now, don't you worry a mite. You 're goin' to get well and earn money and come back and pay her, and everything 's comin' out all right."

In the afternoon tickets arrived from Sergia. There was a line with them, asking Uncle William to call for her, at eight, that evening. The artist looked at the tickets a little enviously. "I should like to go, myself," he said. "It 's the first view." He glanced at Uncle William appealingly.

The old man ignored it. "You could n't go, noways," he said; "not if we 're goin' to start to-morrow."

The artist sighed. He was sitting in an arm-chair, wrapped in a blanket, a

pillow behind his head. "I don't suppose I could." He sighed again.

Uncle William looked at him keenly. "The' 's a good deal of leg-work to an exhibit, ain't they?"

"Yes." The artist smiled faintly.

Uncle William nodded. "I thought so. Well, it 's all *you* can do to set in a chair with a piller behind you. I would n't say no more about picters if I was you." He took down the mirror and laid it between two cushions, holding it in place while he reached for the knot. "I don't suppose you have the least idee how you look," he said. "I cal'ate to have you look a sight better 'n that 'fore Sergia sees you."

The artist's face flushed. "Give me the glass."

Uncle William shook his head. "I've got to hustle to get these things done." He drew the sailor's knot firmly in

place. "I cal'ate to have everything ready so 's to get an early start."

"She would n't mind how I looked," said the young man, defensively.

"Mebbe not." Uncle William was gathering together the trifles from the shelf and table, and knotting them in a table-spread. "You want to save this out?" he asked indifferently. It was a picture of the girl in an oval frame.

The young man seized it. He was looking at it with warm eyes.

Uncle William glanced down on them from his height. "Mebbe not," he said gently, "but I reckon she 'd hate to see ye lookin' like that. It 's about all I can stan' to see ye, myself."

XVI

THE girl looked up from her copying. Uncle William stood in the doorway, beaming on her. She got up quickly. "You are early."

Uncle William held out a hand detainingly. "You set right down and go to work. I come early a-purpose. I thought I 'd like to set a spell and watch ye."

The girl resumed her copying. The lamp beside her shed its dull glow on the page, and on her face and neck, as she bent to it. The dark room rose mysteriously behind her. Uncle William settled himself in his chair with a breath of relief.

When she had finished the copying she came across to him. "It is done now." She smiled to him through the dim light.

"Keeps you workin' pretty steady, don't it?" said Uncle William.

"Yes." There was no complaint in the word.

Uncle William nodded. "I reckoned I 'd find you doin' it. That 's why I come early. I kind o' wanted a chance to set—where 't was quiet and things wa 'n 't worryin'."

She leaned forward. "Is he worse?"

"Well, not worse, so to speak, but kind o' triflin'—wantin' his own way a good deal. If I was home, I would n't mind it a mite. I 'd go out-door and take two-three good whiffs, look at the water and see how things was comin' on. I 'd be all right in no time. But here—" He drew a kind of caged

breath. "It 's worse *out*door 'n 't is *in*."

"You mind the noise, don't you?" She was looking at him sympathetically.

"Well, 't ain't the noise so much,—I 've heard the ocean roar,—it 's folks. Pesters me havin' 'em round—so many on 'em."

Her look changed to a little wonder. "I should think you would like to be with them. You help them." She spoke the words softly, almost shyly. The clear glow of her eyes rested on his face.

The face showed no pride. "Yes, I reckon I help 'em—some. There 's gen-'ally suthin' to do, if you 're where folks be; but I have to get away from 'em.—Can't breathe if I don't.—And there ain't any place to go to. I was feelin' a good deal cooped up to-night,

and then I thought o' your place here." He moved his hand toward the dark recesses. "It 's kind o' clean and high."

They sat in silence, the girl's head resting on her hand.

Uncle William watched her face in the half-light. "You 're gettin' tired and kind o' peaked."

She looked up. "I am resting."

"Yes—yes, I know how it is. You stan' all you can and byme-by you come to a place you can rest in, and you jest rest—hard."

"Yes."

"You ought to 'a' asked somebody to help ye," said Uncle William, gently.

"There was n't any one."

"There was me."

"Yes. I *did* ask you when I could n't go on."

"That wa 'n 't the way. Somebody

would 'a' helped—your folks, like enough—" He stopped, remembering.

"They are dead."

He nodded. "I know. He told me. But I 'd forgot—for a minute. They been dead long?"

"Two years. It was before I came away—at home, in Russia. We were all coming—father and mother and I, and my brother. Then they died; but I wanted to be free." She had flung out her arms with a light movement.

"It 's a dretful good place to get away from," said Uncle William. "Nice folks come from there, too.—I never saw one that wa 'n 't glad to come," he added.

She smiled. "I was glad; and I am glad I came here. It has been hard—a little—but I found Alan." Her voice sang.

"Some folks would say that was the

wust of it," said Uncle William. "You found him and he fell sick, and you had him to take care on—cross as two sticks some of the time." He regarded her mildly.

"*You* don't think so," she said.

"Well, mebbe not, mebbe not," responded Uncle William. "I 'm sort o' queer, perhaps."

She had turned to him half wistfully. "Don't you think I might see him—just a little while?"

Uncle William shook his head. "You 've been too good to him. That 's the wust of wimmen folks. What he needs now is a tonic—suthin' kind o' bitter." He chuckled. "He 's got me."

She smiled. "When are you going to take him away?"

"To-morrow."

She started. "It is very soon," she said softly.

"Sooner the better," said Uncle William. "It 'll do us both good to smell the sea." He pulled out the great watch. "Must be 'most time to be startin'." He peered at it uncertainly.

"Yes, we must go." She rose and brought her hat, a fragile thing of lace and mist, and a little lace mantle with long floating ends. She put them on before the mirror that hung above the table where the copying lay, giving little turns and touches of feminine pleasure.

Uncle William's eyes followed her good-humoredly.

She turned to him, her face glowing, starlike, out of the lace and mist. "You 're laughing at me," she said, reproachfully.

"No, I wa 'n 't laughing, so to speak," returned Uncle William. "I was thinkin' what a sight o' comfort there is in

a bunnit. If men folks wore 'em I reckon they 'd take life easier." He placed his hat firmly on the gray tufts. "That 's one o' the cur'us things—about 'em." They were going down the long flight of stairs and he had placed his hand protectingly beneath her arm. "That 's one o' the cur'us things—how different they be, men and women. I 've thought about it a good many times, how it must 'a' tickled the Lord a good deal when he found how different they turned out—made o' the same kind of stuff, so."

"Don't you suppose he meant it? She was smiling at him under the frilling lace.

"Well, like enough," returned Uncle William, thoughtfully. "It 's like the rest o' the world—kind o' comical and big. Like enough he did plan it that way."

XVII

THE room was filled with the hum of light—faces and flowers and color everywhere. Uncle William walked among them erect, overtopping the crowd, his gaze, for the most part, on the sky-line. Sergia, beside him, seemed a slight figure. Glances followed them as they went, amused or curious or a little admiring. Uncle William, oblivious to the glances and to the crowd that opened before him, and closed silently behind the great figure, beamed upon it all. He was used to making his way through a crowd unhindered. To Sergia the experience was more novel, and she watched the

crowd and the pictures and the old man moving serene among them, with amused eyes. Once she called his attention to a celebrated painter in the crowd. Uncle William's eye rested impartially upon him for a moment and returned to its sky-line. "He looks to me kind o' pindlin'. One o' the best, is he?"

"He 's not strong, you mean?"

"Well, not strong, and not much *to* him,—as if the Lord was kind o' skimped for material. Is that one o' *his* picters?"

Her eye followed his hand. "Alan's! Come." They moved quickly to it across the larger room. "They are all here." Her glance had swept the walls. "In the best light, too." She moved eagerly from one to the other. "See how well they are hung."

Uncle William's eye surveyed them.

"Middlin' plumb," he assented. "That fu'ther one looks to me a leetle mite off the level. It 's the one o' my house, too." He moved toward it and straightened the frame with careful hand, then he stepped back, gazing at it with pride. "Putty good, ain't it?" he said.

She smiled quietly. "Perfect. He has never done anything so good."

"It *is* a putty nice house," said Uncle William. His eye dwelt on it fondly. "I 'd a'most forgot how nice it was. You see that little cloud there —that one jest over the edge? That means suthin' 'fore mornin'." He lifted his hand to it. "I would n't trust a sky like that—not without reefin' down good." He drew a breath. "Cur'us how it makes you feel right there!" he said. "I 'd a'most forgot." He glanced at the moving crowd a little hostilely and drew another deep breath.

"The atmosphere *is* fine," said the girl. She was studying it with half-shut eyes, her head thrown a little back. "It is clear and deep. You can almost breathe it."

"It is a good climate," assented Uncle William. "You could n't get sick there if you tried. Can't hardly die." He chuckled a little. "Sam'l Gruchy 's been tryin' for six year now. He was ninety-seven last month. We don't think nuthin' o' roundin' out a hunderd up there—not the cheerful ones. 'Course if you fret, you can die 'most anywhere."

"Yes, if you fret." The girl was looking at him with pleased eyes. "I don't suppose you 've ever known what it was to fret?"

"Me? Lord, yes! I ust to fret about everything—fretted for fear it would blow and for fear it would n't

blow." His eyes were on the shifting green waves. "I never put down a net nor a lobster-pot that I did n't see 'em bein' chewed up or knocked to pieces. I 'd see a shark a-swimmin' right through a big hole—rip-p—tear. I could see it as plain as if I was down there under the water—all kind o' green and cool, and things swimmin' through it. I can see it jest the same now if I shut my eyes, only it 's fishes I see swimmin' into my net now—shoals of 'em. The' ain't a shark in sight." He was looking down at her, smiling.

She nodded. "You 're an optimist now."

He stared a little. "No, I don't reckon I 'm anything that sounds like that, but I *do* take life comf'table. The' ain't a place anywheres 'round to set and rest, is the'? You look to me kind o' used up."

"I *am* tired—a little. Come. There won't be any one here." She led the way into a small room beyond. A bench facing the large room was vacant, and they sat down on it. Through the vista of the open door they could see two of 'Alan's pictures. They sat in silence for a few minutes, watching the crowd come and go in front of the pictures. She turned to him at last with a little smile. "They are making a hit," she said.

"Be they?" He peered at them intently. His face softened. "They 'd o't to. They 're nice picters."

"Yes." She had started forward a little, her breath coming swiftly. "Do you see that man—the tall one with the gray hair and pointed beard?"

Uncle William adjusted his spectacles. "That kind o' peaked one, you

mean, that dips along some like a government lighter?"

She laughed out, her hands moving with little gestures of pleasure. "That 's the one. I know him."

"Do you?" Uncle William looked at him again politely. "He has a good deal o' trimmin' on, but he looks like a nice sort o' man."

"He is—he is—if he 's the one I think—"

The man, who wore on his coat the decoration of several orders, had turned a little and was looking back over the crowd.

The girl clasped her hands tightly. "Oh, it *is*," she said under her breath. "It is."

Uncle William looked down almost jealously. "You set a good deal o' store by seein' him," he said.

"It is n't that. I like him, yes, but

he knows good work. If he really takes them in, he 'll not let them go."

Uncle William adjusted his spectacles again. "You mean—"

"He will buy them, yes. Hush!" She held out her hand.

The man had turned back to the pictures. He lifted a pair of eyeglasses that swung at the end of a long chain and placed them on his nose. He looked again at the picture before him. The glasses dropped from his nose, and he dipped to the catalogue he held in his hand.

Uncle William's glance followed him a little uneasily. "You mean he 'll buy my house?" he asked.

She nodded, her face overflowing with happiness.

Uncle William surveyed it. "I was cal'atin' to have that one myself." He said it almost grudgingly.

"You were? Could you?" She faced him, open-eyed.

"Could n't I have it as well as him?" He nodded toward the man in the distance intent on his catalogue.

The girl's brow wrinkled a little. "He is rich," she said. "I did n't know—"

"Well, I ain't rich," said Uncle William, "but I reckon I could scrape together enough to pay for a picter."

The girl's face lighted. "Of course, Alan would rather you had it. And he may buy one of the others."

The man had moved on a little, out of sight. The picture remained facing them. For a minute the crowd had parted in front of it and they saw it at the end of a long pathway. Uncle William drew a proud breath. "How much will it cost?" he said.

She took up the catalogue from her

lap and opened it, glancing down the page. "It must be here—somewhere. Yes, this is it— 'The House on the Rocks,' $2000."

Uncle William's jaw clicked a little as it came together. He held out a hand. "Will you just let me look at that a minute?" he said.

He ran his great finger down the page. When it came to the $2000, he pressed it a little with his thumb, as if expecting it to rub off. Then he looked at her, shaking his head. "It 's a leetle higher 'n I can go," he said slowly. "I wa'n't expectin' it would cost so much. You see, the house itself did n't cost more 'n three hunderd, all told, and I thought a picter of it would n't cost more 'n five or six."

"Five or six hundred?" Her eyes laughed.

Uncle William shook his head guilt-

ily. "Not more 'n five or six dollars," he said. "I reckon mebbe I *did* put it a leetle low." A smile had bloomed again in his face. "If he can pay the price, he 'll have to have it, I reckon—for all o' me."

"Yes, he can pay it. He is very rich, and he cares for pictures. He has hundreds. He buys them everywhere—in Paris, London, St. Petersburg, Italy—It only depends on whether he likes—"

The man had come into view again and was studying the picture, dipping toward it in little sidewise flights. Uncle William watched the pantomime jealously. "How 'd you come to know him?" he asked.

"He knew my mother. He had known her from a girl. I think he loved her," she said quietly, her eyes on the man. "He was on the

legation at St. Petersburg— See! He *does* like them!" She had leaned forward.

Uncle William glanced up.

The man was standing a little removed from the painting, his arms folded, his head thrown back, oblivious to the crowd.

She rose quickly. "I am going to speak to him," she said. "Wait here for me." She passed into the changing throng that filled the room beyond.

Uncle William waited patiently, his eyes studying the swift kaleidoscope of the doorway. When she reappeared in it, her face was alight with color. "Come." She held out her hand. "I want you to meet him. He likes them —oh, very much!" She pressed her hands together lightly. "I think he will buy them—two, at least."

Uncle William got to his feet. "I

suppose ye told him about Alan and about my place."

She stopped short, looking at him reproachfully. "Not a word," she said —"not a single word!"

Uncle William's countenance fell. "Wa'n't that what you went out for?"

"No; and you must not mention it. I only told him that you liked them."

"Can't I even say that 's my house out there?" He waved his hand.

"Never!" It was energetic. "You would spoil it all."

"Will it hurt it any to be my house?" he asked, a little sore.

"You know it is not that." She laid her hand on his arm affectionately. "We shall tell him all about it some day; but now, just now, while he is making up his mind, it would distract him. He wants to look at them as art."

Uncle William sighed gently. "Well,

I 'll do my best, but it 's goin' agen' nature not to bust right out with it." They passed into the larger room. On the opposite side the man was standing, his eyeglasses on his nose, looking expectantly toward the door.

When he saw them, he smiled and moved forward with suave grace.

XVIII

THEY met midway in the room. The two tall men stood facing each other, overtopping the crowd. The Frenchman held out his hand. "I am glad to meet you," he said.

Uncle William took the thin hand in his hearty one. "I am glad to meet *you,*" he responded. "Sergia 's been tellin' me about you. She said you liked the picter over yonder." Uncle William's thumb described the arc of a circle.

The Frenchman's eye followed it. "I do," he said, cordially. "Don't you?"

"Well, it 's middlin' good." Uncle

William spoke craftily. They were moving toward it.

"It 's great!" said the Frenchman. He swung his eyeglasses to his nose and gazed at it. They came to a standstill a little distance away.

"The house ain't much to boast on," said Uncle William, modestly.

"The house?" The Frenchman stared at him politely.

Uncle William motioned with his hand. "It 's a kind o' ramshackle ol' thing—no chimbley to speak of—"

The man's face cleared. "Oh, the house—a mere hut!" He dismissed it with a wave.

Uncle William's face wore a subdued look. "It might be comfortable inside," he hazarded after a silence.

The Frenchman stared again. "Comfortable? Oh, without doubt." He granted the point in passing. "But the

color in the rocks—do you see?—and the clear light and the sky—you see how it lifts itself?" His long finger made swift stabs here and there at the canvas. A little crowd had gathered near.

Uncle William pushed his spectacles farther up on the tufts. His face glowed. "The sky is all right," he said, "if ye know how to take it; but ye would n't trust a sky like that, would ye?"

The Frenchman turned to him, blinking a little. His glasses had slipped from his nose. They hung dangling from the end of the long chain. "Trust it?" he said vaguely. "It 's the real thing!"

Uncle William's face assumed an air of explanation. "It 's good as fur as it goes. The' ain't anything the matter with it—not anything you can lay your finger on—not till you get over there, a

little east by sou'east. Don't you see anything the matter over there?" He asked the question with cordial interest.

The Frenchman held the eyeglass chain in his fingers. He swung the glasses to his nose and stared at the spot indicated.

Uncle William regarded him hopefully.

The glasses dropped. He faced about, shaking his head. "I 'm afraid I don't see it." He spoke in polite deprecation. "It seems to me very nearly perfect." He faced it again. "I can breathe that air."

"So can I," said Uncle William. "So can I."

They stood looking at it in silence. "It 'll be fo'-five hours before it strikes," said Uncle William, thoughtfully.

"Before it—" The Frenchman had

half turned. The rapt look in his face wrinkled a little.

"Before it strikes," repeated Uncle William. "That cloud I p'inted out to you means business."

The Frenchman looked again. The wrinkles crept to the corners of his eyes. He turned them on Uncle William. "I see. You were speaking of the weather?"

"Wa'n't you?" demanded Uncle William.

"Well—partly. Yes, partly. But I 'm afraid I was thinking how well it is done." His face grew dreamy. "To think that paint and canvas and a few careless strokes—"

"He worked putty hard," broke in Uncle William. Sergia's hand on his arm stayed him. He remained open-mouthed, staring at his blunder.

But the Frenchman had not perceived it. He accepted the correction with a

cordial nod. "Of course—infinite patience. And then a thing like that!" he lifted his hand toward it slowly. It was a kind of courteous salute—the obeisance due to royalty.

Uncle William watched it a little grudgingly. "They 're putty good rocks," he said—"without paint."

The Frenchman faced him. "Don't I know?" He checked himself. "I 've not mentioned it to you, but I was born and brought up on those rocks."

"You was!" Uncle William confronted him.

The stranger nodded, smiling affably. His long nose was reminiscent. "I 've played there many a time."

Sergia's face watched him hopefully.

Uncle William's had grown a little stern. He bent toward the stranger. "I don't think I jest caught your name," he said slowly.

"My name is Curie," said the man,

politely—"Benjamin F. Curie." He extracted a card from his pocket and handed it to Uncle William with a deep bow.

Uncle William pinched it between his thumb and forefinger. He drew down the spectacles from his tufts and examined it carefully. Then he bent and snapped it in his fingers. "I don't know no such—"

A hand was laid lightly on his arm. "Come, we must look at the other pictures. It is almost time to go."

The crowd had thinned a little and they walked through it easily, three abreast. But Uncle William had moved to the other side of the girl, as far away from the Frenchman as he could get. Now and then he cast a glance of disapproval at the tall, dipping figure as it bent to the girl or lifted itself to gaze at some picture. There was distrust in

Uncle William's glance, mingled with vague disturbance. When they paused again, he moved around in front of the man. "The' 's suthin' kind o' familiar about your face—" he began.

Sergia's hand was again on his arm.

He patted it lightly. "Don't you worry a mite, Sergia. I ain't goin' to say anything rash. But it does seem to me as if I 've seen Mr. Curie's face somewheres or other. 'T ain't a face you 're liable to forget."

The Frenchman acknowledged the compliment. "It is possible we have met. You have traveled?"

"A leetle," admitted Uncle William.

Sergia's face relaxed. She moved away for a minute.

The Frenchman nodded. "We have doubtless met; but one forgets—" He lifted his eyeglasses and surveyed Uncle William's round, good face. "It

does n't seem as if I could have forgotten yours," he said thoughtfully. "And yet I don't place it."

Sergia had returned. "He has been to St. Petersburg," she suggested.

The Frenchman's look cleared. "Ah—! It must have been there. It is a privilege to have met you again, sir." He held out his long, slim hand. "I wish you would come and see me. You have my address." He motioned to the card.

Uncle William looked down at it. "I 'm startin' for home to-morrow," he said dryly.

"Indeed! And your home is—"

Sergia interposed a graceful hand. "Good-night, M. Curie. *You* will come and see *me*. Mama would be glad I have found you again."

He looked down at her mistily. His gaze lingered on her face. "I shall

come, my child," he said gallantly, almost tenderly. "I shall come many times."

"Yes, I shall look for you. Be sure." She took Uncle William's arm and moved away to the staircase.

Uncle William's mouth opened and closed once or twice with a little puff. When they reached the foot of the stairs he broke out. "He says he 's a Curie." He flipped the card in his hand. "I 've known Arichat, man and boy, for sixty year. The' wa'n't never any Curies there."

She looked up at him a little perplexed. "Could n't you have forgotten?"

Uncle William shook his head. "I wish 't I had. You set a good deal o' store by him, I can see. But I ain't likely to forget anybody that 's been brought up there. The' *was* suthin'

kind o' familiar about him, too." He said it almost irascibly.

The girl sighed softly. "Well, he may have been romancing. Frenchmen do—at times—"

"I call it lying," snorted Uncle William.

"Yes, yes." She patted his arm. "But can't you understand how you would feel if you saw something beautiful—some place that made you feel the way you used to feel when you were a child? You might think for a moment that you had really been there, and say it—without meaning to tell a lie. That 's what I meant."

Uncle William looked down at her admiringly. "You do put that mighty nice, don't you? You 'most make me believe I could do it, and I guess mebbe I could. But Andy could n't," he added, with conviction.

The girl followed her thought. "And what does it matter—if he buys the pictures?"

"Well, it matters some," said Uncle William, slowly. "I dunno 's I want a liar, not a real liar, ownin' a picter o' my house. But if he jest romances, mebbe I could stand it. It does seem different somehow."

When they parted, she looked at him a little wistfully. "I should like to see him again," she said, waiting.

"Like enough," said Uncle William, gently—"like enough. But I reckon he don't need you just now." He held her hand, looking down at her kindly.

"*I* could see *him*," she suggested.

"How's that?"

"I could come down to the boat. I would be careful not to let him see me."

Uncle William considered it. "Well, I dunno 's that would do any harm—if you 're sure you could keep out o' the way."

"Yes," eagerly.

"We 're goin' by the Halifax boat," said Uncle William. "I can make better 'rangements that way. I know the captain."

"Yes?" It was a question.

"Well, I guess 't you can come. Good night, my dear." He bent and kissed her gravely.

Her eyes followed the tall figure till it loomed away in the dark.

XIX

HE boat eased away from the wharf. The invalid on deck gazed back at the city. A little spot of red lay in the hollow of either cheek. Uncle William hovered about, adjusting pillows and rugs. Now and then his eye dropped to the wharf and picked out, casually, a figure that moved in the crowd. "There— that 's a leetle mite easier, ain't it?"

The young man nodded almost fretfully. "I 'm all right, Uncle William. Don't you fuss any more." He leaned forward, looking toward the wharf. "Who is that?"

Uncle William pushed up his spec-

tacles and peered. "I don't seem to see anybody," he said truthfully. He was gazing with some painstaking in the opposite direction.

"Not there. Look!—She 's gone!" He sank back with a sigh.

"Somebody you knew, like enough?" The question was indifferent.

"I thought it was—her."

"Sho, now! She would n't be likely to be down here this time o' day."

"No, I suppose not. It was just a fancy."

"That 's all. You comfortable?"

"Yes—" a little impatiently.

"That 's good. Now we 're off." Uncle William beamed on the water that billowed before and behind. He went off to find the captain.

When he came back, the young man had ceased to look toward the shore. "I made a mistake," he said regretfully.

[redacted]

[illegible] Uncle William

"[illegible]," said Uncle William. "[illegible] you [illegible] been [illegible] of her. [illegible] and you jest thought you saw her. I would [illegible] think any—"

"It was [illegible] the young man [illegible]. "I did see her. I know now. I saw her face for a minute as plain as I see yours. She was looking straight at me and I saw all of a sudden what a fool I was."

"You're gettin' better," said Uncle William.

"Do you think so? I was afraid—" he hesitated.

"You thought mebbe you was a-goin' to die?"

"Well— I have heard that people see clearly— It came over me in a flash so—"

"Lord, no!" Uncle William chuckled. "You 're jest gettin' your wits back, that 's all. I should n't wonder

if you 'd be real pert by the time we get there. I cal'ate you 'll be consid-abul help to me—dish-washin' an' so on."

The towers and chimneys behind them dwindled. The smoke of the city faded to a blur and grew to clear azure. The wind blew against their faces. After a little the young man got to his feet. "I 'm going to walk awhile." He spoke defiantly.

"Walk right along," said Uncle William, cheerfully.

He tottered a few steps, and held out his hand.

Uncle William chuckled. "I reck-oned you 'd want a lift." He placed a strong hand under the young man's arm. They paced back and forth the length of the deck. "Feel good?" asked Uncle William.

The young man nodded. "I shall go alone to-morrow."

"Yes, I reckon you will," soothingly. "And the further north we get, the better you 'll feel. It 's cur'us about the North. The' 's suthin' up there keeps drawin' you like a needle. I 've known a man to be cured jest by turnin' and sailin' that way when he was sick. Seem 's if he stopped pullin' against things and jest let go. You look to me a little mite tired. I 'd go below for a spell if I was you."

The young man went below and slept. When he woke he felt better, as Uncle William had predicted. At Halifax he insisted on sending a telegram to Sergia. After that he watched the water with gleaming face, and when they boarded the *John L. Cann* and the shores of Arichat shaped themselves out of space, he was like a boy.

Uncle William leaned forward, scanning the wharf. "There 's Andy!" he exclaimed.

"Where?"

"Right there. Don't you see him—dangling his legs over the edge?"

"Hallo, Andy!" The young man's voice had a joyous note.

Andy grunted.

When they landed, he held out a limp hand. "Got any duds?" he asked indifferently.

"There 's my box and hisn and some traps down below. He 's gone down to look after 'em," said Uncle William. "Juno come back?"

"Nope."

The young man appeared on deck with his hand-bag. "How are you, Andy?"

Andy nodded.

"He says she ain't come back," said Uncle William.

"Who?"

"Juno. She must 'a' been gone as much as a week, ain't she, Andy?"

"Two weeks last night," said Andy.

"Tuh-tuh!" Uncle William's tongue expressed concern. "We 'll hev to go look for her. You goin' to row us up?"

"Guess so," said Andy.

"I thought ye 'd want to. Set right there, Mr. Woodworth. Don't you mind bein' in the way. Andy 's used to it."

They rowed up through the clear light. The harbor stretched away, gleaming, to darkness. The cliffs rose on the right, somber and waiting. Uncle William lifted his face. The little house on the cliff caught a gleam and twinkled. The boat grated on the beach. There was a stiff climb up the path, with long pauses for breath.

Uncle William opened the door. He moved back swiftly. A gray avalanche had descended upon him. She clawed at his shoulder and perched there, looking down at him.

A smile overspread Uncle William's face. He put up a hand to the gray fur, stroking it. "Now, don't that beat all?" he said. "She 's been here all along, like enough, Andy."

"Durned if I know," said Andy. He looked at her aggressively. "I hain't seen hide nor hair of her for two weeks."

Juno returned the look, purring indifferently. She leaped from Uncle William's shoulder, leading the way into the house, her back arched and her tail erect; her toes scarcely touched the boards she trod upon.

She disappeared under the red lounge. In a moment her head reap-

peared—with something dangling from the mouth. She laid it proudly at Uncle William's feet.

He peered at it. "Ketched a mouse, hev ye? I reckoned she would n't starve, Andy!" He beamed on him.

"That ain't a mouse," said Andy.

"Why, so 't ain't.—Juno!" Uncle William's voice was stern. "You come here!"

Juno came—with another. She laid it at his feet and departed for a third. By the time the fifth was deposited before him, Uncle William said feebly: "That 's enough for this time, Juno. Don't you do no more."

She added one more to the wriggling row, and seated herself calmly beside it, looking up for approval.

Uncle William glared at her for a minute. Then a sunny smile broke his face. "That 's all right, Juno." He

bent and stroked the impassive head. "I was prepared to mourn for ye, if need be, but not to rejoice—not to this extent. But it 's all right." Juno purred in proud content.

XX

IT was fortunate that the artist was better, for Uncle William became lost in the kittens and their welfare. The weakest thing at hand claimed his interest. He carried them in a clam-basket from point to point, seeking the best spots for their comfort and development. Juno marched at his side, proud and happy. She purred approval of the universe and the ways of man. Wherever Uncle William deposited the basket, she took up her abode, serenely pleased; and when, a few hours later, he shifted it on account of wind or rain or sun, she followed without demur. For her the sun rose and set in

Uncle William's round face and the depths of the clam-basket.

The artist watched the comedy with amused disapproval. He suspected Uncle William of trifling away the time. The spring was fairly upon them, and the *Andrew Halloran* still swung at anchor alone at the foot of the cliff. Whenever the artist broached the subject of a new boat, Uncle William turned it aside with a jest and trotted off to his clam-basket. The artist brooded in silence over his indebtedness and the scant chance of making it good. He got out canvas and brushes and began to paint, urged by a vague sense that it might bring in something, some time. When he saw that Uncle William was pleased, he kept on. The work took his mind off himself, and he grew strong and vigorous. Andy, coming upon him one day on the beach, looked

at his brown face almost in disapproval. "You 're a-feelin' purty well, ain't you?" he said grudgingly.

"I am," responded the artist. He mixed the color slowly on his palette. A new idea had come into his head. He turned it over once and then looked at Andy. The look was not altogether encouraging. But he brought it out quickly. "You 're a rich man, are n't you, Andy?"

Andy, pleased and resentful, hitched the leg of his trousers. "I dunno 's I be," he said slowly. "I 've got money —some. But it takes a pile to live on."

"Yes?" The artist stood away from his canvas, looking at it. "You and Uncle William are pretty good friends, are n't you?"

"Good enough," replied Andy. His mouth shut itself securely.

The artist did not look at it. He has-

tened on. "He misses his boat a good deal."

"I know that," snapped Andy. His green eye glowered at the bay. "Ef it had n't been for foolishness he 'd hev it now."

The artist worked on quietly. "I lost his boat for him, Andy. I know that as well as you do. You need n't rub it in."

"What you goin' to do 'bout it?" demanded Andy.

"I 'm going to ask you to lend me the money for a new one."

"No, sir!" Andy put his hands in his pockets.

"I 'll give you my note for it," said the artist.

"I do' want your note," retorted Andy. "I 'd ruther have Willum's, and his ain't wuth the paper it 's writ on."

The artist flushed under his new color. "I don't know just why you say that. I shall pay all I owe—in time."

"Well, you may, and then again you may n't," said Andy. His tone was less crusty. "All I know is, you 've cost Willum a heap o' money, fust and last. You 've e't a good deal, and you lost the *Jennie,* and he had to borrow a hunderd of me to go to New York with." Andy spoke with unction. He was relieving his mind.

The artist looked up. "I did n't know that." He began to gather up his materials.

"What you goin' to do?" asked Andy.

"I 'm going to find Uncle William," said the artist.

Andy fidgeted a little. He looked off at the water. "I wa'n't findin' no

fault," he said uneasily. "I was just explainin' why I could n't resk any more o' my money on him."

"That 's all right," said the artist. "I want to see him."

He found Uncle William sunning the kittens at the east of the house. He looked up with a nod as the artist appeared. "They 're doin' fust-rate," he said, adjusting the clam-basket a little. "They 'll be a credit to their raising. Set down."

The artist seated himself on a rock near by. The sun fell warm on his back. Across the harbor a little breeze ran rippling. At the foot of the cliff Andy was making ready to lift anchor. The artist watched him a minute. "You 've wasted a good deal of money on me," he said soberly.

Uncle William looked at him. He dropped an eye to the *Andrew Hallo-*

ran. "He been talkin' to ye?" he asked cheerfully.

"He told me you borrowed of him—"

"Now, don't you mind that a mite. Andy don't. He 's proud as Punch to have me owe him suthin'. He reminds me of it every day or two. All I mind about it is your frettin' and takin' on so. If you 'd jest be easy in your mind, we 'd have a reel comf'table time—with the kittens and all." He replaced one that had sprawled over the edge. "The' 's a lot o' comfort in doin' for dumb things," he went on cheerfully. "They can't find fault with the way you fix 'em." He chuckled a little.

The artist smiled. "Look here, Uncle William, you can't fool me any longer. You 're just pining for a boat. Look at that!" He waved his hand at the water dimpling below.

Uncle William's gaze dwelt on it fondly for a minute.

"And you sit here dawdling over that basket of kittens!" Scorn and disgust struggled in the artist's voice.

Uncle William laughed out. He stood up. "What is 't you want me to do?" he asked.

The artist eyed him miserably. "That 's the worst of it—I don't know."

"Well, I 'll tell ye," said Uncle William. "We 'll row down and get the mail, and after that we 'll plan about the boat. I ain't quite so daft as I look," he said half apologetically. "I 've been turnin' it over in my mind whilst I 've been doin' the kittens, and I 've 'bout decided what to do. But fust, we 'll get the mail."

[illegible]

THESIS was a letter for the artist. It contained a check from the Frenchman. He had bought three of the pictures—the one of Uncle William's house and the two of the old Bodet place.

"Did you know it?" demanded the artist. He was facing Uncle William in the boat as they rowed home.

"I did n't jest know it," said Uncle William, with a long, easy pull, "but I reckoned suthin' 'd be along putty soon. If it had n't come to-day, I was goin' to make Andy give us enough to begin on."

"He would n't have done it."

"Oh, yes, he 'd 'a' done it. He 'd 'a' squirmed and twisted some, but he 'd 'a' done it. He 'd 'a' had to!"

The artist laughed out happily. "Well, now you can do as you like. We 'll have the best boat there is going."

Uncle William nodded. "I knew you 'd want to. I 've been kind o' plannin' for it. We 'll go down to-morrow or next day and see about it."

The artist looked at him curiously. "I don't believe you care half as much as I do!"

Uncle William returned the look, smiling broadly. "It 'll seem putty good to feel my own boards under me again," he said cheerfully.

"But you did n't care when you did n't have them," said the artist. "You just toted those infernal kittens—"

Uncle William's chuckle was genial. "Kittens ain't everything," he said mildly. "But I 've seen the time when kittens wa'n't to be despised. You jest set that way a little mite, Mr. Woodworth, and I 'll beach her even."

"One thing I 'm glad of," said the artist, as the boat grated along the pebbles. "You can pay Andy."

"Andy 'll be glad," responded Uncle William, "but it 'll be quite a spell before he has a chance to." He waved his arm toward the bay. "He 's off for the day."

The artist scanned the horizon with disappointed face. "He 'll be back by noon, perhaps?"

Uncle William shook his head. "Not afore night. I can tell by the way he 's movin'. We 'll come up and hev dinner and then we can plan her out."

They sat on the rocks all the after-

noon, looking at the dancing waves and planning the new *Jennie*. Uncle William drew models on the back of an old envelope and explained figures. The artist followed him with eager eyes. Now and then his chest expanded and he drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

"Feel 's good, don't it?" said Uncle William. "I ust to feel that way when I 'd been in debt a good while and made a big ketch. Seemed 's if the whole world slid off my shoulders." He shook his head. "But it was kind o' foolishness."

"Would n't you feel that way now?" demanded the artist.

"I don't believe I would," said Uncle William, slowly. "It 's a kind o' wicked feelin'—when the sun 's a-shining jest the same, and the water 's movin' up and down,—" he motioned toward the harbor,—"and the boats are

comin' in at night, settlin' down like birds, and the lights.' He looked affectionately at the water. "It 's all there jest the same whether I owe anybody or not. And the rocks don't budge much—" He laid his big brown hand on the warm surface beside him, smoothing it in slow content.

The artist looked at him, smiling a little wistfully. "It sounds all very well to talk about," he said, "but the world would go to rack and ruin if everybody felt that way."

"I ust to think so," said Uncle William, placidly. "I ust to lie awake nights worryin' about it. But late years I 've give it up. 'Seems to jog along jest about the same as when I was worryin'—and *I* take a heap sight more comfort. Seems kind o' ridiculous, don't it, when the Lord 's made a world

as good as this one, not to enjoy it some?"

"Don't you feel any responsibility toward society?" asked the artist, curiously.

Uncle William shook his head with a slow smile. "I don't believe I do. I ust to. Lord, yes! I ust to think about folks that was hungry till my stummick clean caved in. I used to eat my dinner like it was sawdust, for fear I 'd get a little comfort out of it, while somebody somewheres was starvin'—little childern, like enough. That was al'ays the hardest part of it—little childern. I ust to think some of foundin' a' sylum up here on the rocks—sailin' round the world and pickin' up a boat-load and then bringin' 'em up here and turnin' 'em loose on the rocks, givin' 'em all they could stuff to eat. And then one night, when I was cal'atin' and figgerin'

on it, I saw that I could n't get half of 'em into my boat, nor a quarter, nor a tenth—jest a little corner of 'em. And then it come over me, all of a sudden, what a big job I 'd tackled, and I jest turned it over to the Lord, then and there. And all the next day I kep' kind o' thinking about it out here on the rocks—how he 'd took a thousand year—mebbe 't was more; a good long spell, they say—to get the rocks ready for folks to live on—jest the rocks! And like enough he knew what he was plannin' to do, and did n't expect me to finish it all up for him in fo'-five years. Since then I 've been leavin' it to him more—takin' a hand when I could, but payin' more attention to livin'. I sort o' reckon that 's what he made us for—to live. The' 's a good deal o' fun in it if you go at it right.

"That 's a great idea, Uncle William," said the artist.

"It 's comf'tabul," assented Uncle William. "You get your living as you go along, and a little suthin' over. Seems 's if some folks did n't even get a living they 're so busy doing things."

He was silent for a while, his blue eyes following the light on the water. "The' was a man I sailed with once,—a cur'us sort o' chap,—and when he wa'n't sober he could tell you interestin' things. He had n't been a sailor al'ays—took to it 'cause he liked it, he said. And he tol' me a good deal about the goings-on of the earth. Like enough 't wa'n't so—some on it—but it was interestin'. He told me 't the earth was all red-hot once, and cooled off quicker on the outside—like a hot pertater, I s'pose. You 've heard about it?" He looked inquiringly at the artist.

The artist nodded. "Yes."

"Well, I 've thought about that a good many times when I 've been sailin'. I could see it all, jest the way he put it, the earth a-whirlin' and twirlin', and the fire and flames a-shootin' up to the sky, and rocks and stones and stuff a-b'ilin' and flyin'—" Uncle William's eye dwelt lovingly on the picture. "I 'd seem to see it all jest the way he tol' it, and then I 'd put my hand out over the side of the boat and trail it along in the water to cool off a little." Uncle William chuckled. "Sometimes it seems 's if you 'd come a million miles all in a minute—rocks all along the shore, good hard rocks 't you could set on, and the hill up to the sky with grass on it, green and soft, and the water all round. It a'most takes your breath away to come back like that from that red-hot ball he talked about and see it

all lyin' there, so cool and still, and the sun shinin' on it. I got to thinkin' 'bout it, days when I was sailin', and wondering if mebbe the Lord wa'n't gettin' *folks* ready jest the way he did the rocks—rolling 'em over and having 'em pound each other and claw and fight and cool off, slow-like, till byme-by they 'd be good sweet earth and grass and little flowers—comf'tabul to live with."

The artist sat up. "Do you mean to say you would n't stop folks fighting if you could?"

Uncle William eyed the proposition. "Well, I dunno 's I 'd say jest *that*. I 've thought about it a good many times. Men al'ays *hev* fit and I reckon they *will*—quite a spell yet. There 's Russia and Japan now: you could n't 'a' stopped them fightin' no more 'n two boys that had got at it. All them

Russians and them little Japs—we could n't 'a' stopped 'em fightin'—the whole of us could n't have stopped 'em—not unless we 'd 'a' took 'em by the scruff o' the neck and thrown 'em down and set on 'em—one apiece. And I dunno 's that 'd be much better 'n fightin'—settin' on 'em one apiece."

The artist laughed out.

Uncle William beamed on him. "You see, this is the way I figger it: Russia and Japan wa'n't fightin' so much for anything they reelly wanted to *git*. It was suthin' *in* 'em that made 'em go for each other, tooth and nail, and pommel so—a kind o' pizen bubbling and sizzling inside 'em; we 've all got a little of it." He smiled genially. "It has to work out slow-like. Some does it by fightin' and some does it by prayin'; and I reckon the Lord 's in the fightin', same as in the prayin'."

The artist looked at him curiously. "Some people call that the devil, you know."

Uncle William cleared his throat. He picked up a little stone and balanced it thoughtfully on the palm of his hand. Then he looked up with a slow smile. "I ain't so well acquainted with the devil as I ust to be," he said. "I ust to know him reel well; ust to think about him when I was out sailin'—figger how to get ahead of him. But late years I 'd kind o' forgot— He 's livin' still, is he?"

The artist laughed quietly. "They say so—some of them."

Uncle William's smile grew wider and sweeter. "Well, let him live. Poor old thing! 'T won't hurt none, and he *is* a kind o' comfort to lay things on when you 've been, more 'n usual, cussed. That 's the *Andrew Halloran*

over there to the left." He pointed to a dusky boat that was coming in slowly. "That 's his last tack, if he makes it, and I reckon he will. Now, if you 'll go in and start the chowder, I 'll see if he wants any help about makin' fast."

XXII

ANDY eased in to the wharf with cautious eye. He threw the rope to Uncle William and busied himself with the sail.

Uncle William peered down upon him. "Got quite a nice mess, did n't ye?"

"Yep."

"How 'd they run?"

"Cod—mostly."

"Ye got *some* halibut."

"A few." Andy admitted it grudgingly. His tone implied that the Creator withheld halibut out of pure spite. The ways of the universe were a personal grievance to Andy.

"[illegible]," said Uncle William. "[illegible]?"

"[illegible]—[illegible]."

"[illegible]," said Uncle William. He [illegible] at the sky. "[illegible] down and keep ye clean, [illegible] supper."

Andy [illegible] in silence. His [illegible] appeared above the edge of the [illegible]. Uncle William looked down [illegible]. "I've got good news for [illegible]."

"[illegible]?" Andy paused half way.

Uncle William [illegible]. "You'll be [illegible] I'm goin' to have a new boat—right off."

"[illegible]?" Andy's mouth remained open. It took in the sky and the bay and Uncle William's smile.

"Right off. I knew ye'd be glad."

The mouth came together. "Where you goin' to get it?"

"He 's got some money." Uncle William nodded toward the cliff.

Andy looked. "He 's poor as poverty. He 's said so—times enough."

Uncle William smiled. "He 's had luck—quite a run o' luck. He 's been sellin' picters—three-four on 'em."

"What 's picters!" said Andrew, scornfully. He scrambled on to the wharf with a backward glance at the *Andrew Halloran*. "You won't buy no boat off o' picters, Willum. A boat costs three hunderd dollars—a good one."

"I was cal'atin' to pay five hunderd," said Uncle William.

"You was?" Andy wheeled about. "You won't get it out o' him!" He jerked a thumb at the cliff.

Uncle William chuckled. "Now, ye 've made a mistake, Andy. He 's got that much and he 's got more."

The gentle triumph in Uncle William's tone diffused itself over the landscape.

Andy took it in slowly. "How much?" he asked at last.

"Six-seven thousand," said Uncle William.

"What!" Andy's feet scuffed a little. "'T ain't reasonable," he said feebly.

"No, 't ain't reasonable." Uncle William spoke gently. "I was a good deal s'prised myself, Andy, when I found how high they come—picters. Ye can't own a gre't many of 'em—not at one time."

"Don't want to," said Andy, caustically.

"No, you would n't take much comfort in 'em," said William. "'*T is* cur'us 't anybody should want a picter o' my old hut up there 'nough to pay—

how much d' ye s'pose they did pay for it, Andy?"

Andy glanced at it contemptuously. It glowed in the light of the late sun, warm and radiant. "'T ain't wuth a hunderd," he said.

Uncle William's face fell a little. "Well, I would n't say jest that, Andy."

"Roof leaks," said Andrew.

"A leetle," admitted Uncle William, "over 'n the southeast corner. She 's weather-tight all but that." He gazed at the little structure affectionately. The sun flamed at the windows, turning them to gold. The artist's face appeared at one of them, beckoning and smiling. Uncle William turned to Andy. "A man give him two thousand for it," he said. There was sheer pride in the words.

"For that?" Andy looked at him for

a minute. Then he looked at the house and the bay and the flaming sky. His left eyelid lowered itself slowly and he tapped his forehead significantly with one long finger.

Uncle William shook his head. "He 's as sensible as you be, Andy—or me."

Andy pondered the statement. A look of craft crept into his eye. "What 'll ya bet he ain't foolin' ye?" he said.

Uncle William returned the look with slow dignity. "I don't speak that way o' my friends, Andy," he said gently. "I 'd a heap rather trust 'em and get fooled, than not to trust 'em and hev 'em all right."

Andy looked guilty. "When 's it comin'?" he said gruffly.

"It 's come a'ready," replied Uncle William; "this mornin'. We 've been figgerin' on a new boat all day, off

and on. He 's goin' to give me five hunderd to make up for the *Jennie.*"

"She wa'n't wuth it!" Andy spoke with conviction. He dropped a jealous eye to the *Andrew Halloran* rising slowly on the tide.

"No, she wa'n't wuth more 'n three hunderd, if she was that," admitted Uncle William. "I 'm goin' to take the three hunderd outright and borrow the rest. I 'm goin' to pay you, too, Andy."

Andy's face, in the light of the setting sun, grew almost mellow. He turned it slowly. "When you goin' to pay me, Willum?"

"To-morrow," answered William, promptly, "or mebbe next day. I reckoned we 'd all go down and see about the boat together."

Andy looked about him helplessly. "Everything seems kind o' turnin' up-

side down," he said. He drew a deep breath. "What d' ye s'pose it is, Willum—about 'em—picters—that makes 'em cost so like the devil?"

Uncle William looked thoughtful. "I dunno," he said slowly. "I 've thought about that, myself. Can't be the paint nor the canvas."

"Cheap as dirt," said Andy.

"Must be the way he does 'em."

"Just a-settin' and a-daubin', and a-settin' and a-daubin'," sneered Andrew.

"I dunno 's I 'd say that, Andy," said Uncle William, reprovingly. "He sweat and fussed a lot."

Andy's eye roamed the landscape. "'T ain't reasonable," he said, jealously. "A thing o't to be wuth more 'n a picter of it. There 's more *to* a thing." He struck the solid ground of fact with relief.

Uncle William's eye rested on him mildly. "Ye can't figger it that way, Andy. I 've tried it. A shark 's bigger 'n a halibut, but he ain't wuth much —'cept for manure."

"Chowder!" The call rang down from the little house, clear and full.

Both men looked up. "*He 's* a-callin' ye," said Andrew. There was mingled scorn and respect in the tone.

"You come on up to supper, Andy. We can talk it over whilst we 're eatin'."

Andy looked down at his clothes. "I 'm all dirt."

Uncle William surveyed him impartially. "Ye ain't any dirtier 'n ye al-'ays be."

"I dunno 's I be," admitted Andy.

"Well, you come right along, and after supper we 'll all turn to and help you clean."

The artist looked up as they entered. "How are you, Andy? The fish are running great to-day."

Andy grinned feebly. "I 've heard about it," he said. He drew up to the table with a subdued air and took his chowder in gulps, glancing now and then at the smiling face and supple hands on the opposite side of the table. It was a look of awe tinged with incredulity, and a little resentment grazing the edges of it.

XXIII

THE noon sun shone down upon the harbor. The warmth of early summer was in the air. A little breeze ran through it, ruffling the surface of the water. The artist, from his perch on the rock, looked out over it with kindling eye.

His easel, on the rock before him, had held him all the morning. He had been trying to catch the look of coming summer, the crisp, salt tang of the water, and the scudding breeze. When he looked at the canvas, a scowl held his forehead, but when he glanced back at the water, it vanished in swift delight. It was color to dream on, to gloat over —to wait for. Some day it would grow

of itself on his palette, and then, before it could slip away, he would catch it. It only needed a stroke—he could wait. His eye wandered to the horizon.

A face appeared over the edge of the cliff and cut off the vision. It was Uncle William, puffing a little and warm. "Hello." He climbed up and seated himself on the rock, stretching his legs slowly to the sun. "I reckoned I 'd find ye here. Been doin' her?" He nodded toward the horizon.

The artist looked into the distance with puzzled eye. "Her?" He put the word doubtingly.

Uncle William glanced at him sharply. "Don't you see nuthin' over there?" He waved a huge arm at the horizon.

The artist looked again and shook his head slowly. "I see a color I 'd give my eyes to get."

Uncle William chuckled a little. "Reckon they ain't wuth much to ye." His hand slid into the pocket of his coat and brought out a small spy-glass. He slipped the parts into place and adjusted it to his eye. "There!" He handed it to the young man. "See if that 'll help ye any."

The young man took it, looking out over the bay. "Yes, I see her now. She 's a schooner." He put down the glass. "Do you mean to say you can see that with the naked eye?"

"Al'ays could." Uncle William held out his hand again for the glass. "I don't make her out a schooner, though."

"She 's two-masted."

"Yes." Uncle William's eye was glued to the glass. "But she 's lighter built, trimmer. Some pleasure-craft, like enough. You can see her walk—same as if she was a lady—a-bowin'

and bobbin'." He laid down the glass, a look of pleasure in his face. "She 's comin' right in, whoever she is. She 'll drop anchor by noon-time." He glanced at the easel. "You been paintin'?"

"Trying to."

"'Bout a thousand dollars' wuth, I s'pose?"

"Not ten cents' worth."

"Sho, now! Is that so?" He got up and looked down at the canvas, bending above it like some genial giraffe. He straightened himself, smiling. "'Tis kind o' dobby," he admitted. "Mebbe you 'll do better tomorrow."

"Maybe. Was there a letter for me?"

The old man shook his head. "Nary letter.—I reckon 't ain't time yet," he added consolingly.

The young man looked gloomily at the water. "She must be ill."

"Busy, more likely," said Uncle William.

"It 's been six weeks."

"You 're feelin' putty well," said Uncle William.

"I shall go down to-morrow," said the young man. He had begun to gather up his brushes. The hands that lifted them were firm and strong. A clear color ran beneath the tan of his face.

Uncle William watched him with a little smile. "I dunno 's I 'd go to-morrow. You could go next week if you don't hear nuthin'."

"I shall go to-morrow. I 've been a fool to wait so long."

Uncle William's eye twinkled. "You 've been gettin' well," he said.

"I 'm well now."

"Is you in— Hello, there 's Andy." He leaned over the edge of the cliff. "What d' ye make her?" he called down.

Andy squinted at the distance. "Coaster," he announced.

"Come up here and take a look at her."

Andy climbed slowly up the cliff. "Got your glass?" He took it and fixed the moving speck. "T ain't a coaster," he muttered. "What you folks been doin' all the mornin'?"

"Well, I 've been for the mail and some things, and Mr. Woodworth here he 's been paintin'."

Andy cast a side glance at the easel. Then he gazed fixedly at the bay. He seated himself on a rock. "It 's time for me to go home," he said.

No one paid any attention to it— Andy least of all. He sat with one leg

swinging over the other, chewing a bit of grass and staring gloomily out to sea. The look of baffled humility in his face made it almost tragic. The artist fell to sketching it under cover of his hand. Uncle William studied the approaching boat. "She 's never been in these waters afore," he announced. "She 's comin' in keerful." No one replied. Andy stared at fate and the artist worked fast. Uncle William reached out for the glass. He took a long look. He dropped it hastily and glanced at the young man, who was working with serene touch—oblivious to the bay. Uncle William looked through the glass again—a long, slow look. Then he slipped it into his pocket and got up, decision in his face. "Comin' into dinner, Andy?"

Andy looked up mildly. "I reckon Harr'et 's waitin' for me." He got

slowly to his feet. "You 've got another done, I s'pose?" He glanced enviously at the easel.

The artist laughed out. "Want to see it?" He withdrew his hand.

Andy shambled across. He looked down at it casually. A sheepish grin crept into his face, and spread. "You 've made me look kind o' queer, hain't you?" He gazed, fascinated, at his tragic face.

Uncle William came over and bent to the canvas. He drew out his spectacles and peered at it, almost rubbing the paint with his great nose. "It 's Andy!" he said with shrewd delight. "It 's Andy! And it 's the spittin' image of him!" He pushed up the glasses, beaming upon Andrew.

Andrew returned the look somberly. "It 's a good likeness, you think, do you?"

"Fust-rate, Andy, fust-rate; could n't be better." Uncle William laid an affectionate hand on his shoulder. "It looks jest as mean as you do—and jest as good, too, Andy."

Andy cast a glance at the young man. "How long was ye makin' it?"

"Half an hour, perhaps; while we 've been sitting here."

Andy sighed heavily. "Wuth more 'n I be, too, I reckon?"

The artist stared at him.

"I mean—" Andy was almost apologetic. "I know they come high—picters. I don't suppose I could afford to buy it of ye—"

The artist's face lighted. "Do you want it?"

"Harr'et might,"—cautiously,—"if 't wa' n't too high. She 's got an easel for it. She al'ays cal'ated to have me done, and she 'd got as fur as

the easel." His eye returned almost wistfully to the canvas. "Willum says it 's a good likeness." He spoke with a kind of dubious pride.

"It *is* good." The young man s eye rested on it affectionately. "It 's a ripping good sketch—and you may have it and welcome."

Andy drew back a step. "You mean—"

"I 'll give it to you, yes." The artist was holding it out laughingly. "And some day you 'll sit for me again. That 'll be pay enough."

Andy rubbed his hands carefully on the sides of his trousers. He reached them out for the canvas. "It 's kind o' wet," he said. "I 'll have to hold it keerful." He took it in both hands, beaming upon it with a kind of somber joy. Carrying it at arm's-length, he bore it away over the rocks. The ar-

tist watched the stern, angular figure loom against the sky and dip down over the cliff out of sight.

"I shall do a sketch of him some day that will make us famous," he said quietly.

"It 's time for dinner," responded Uncle William.

XXIV

NCLE WILLIAM set the table, with one eye on the harbor. As he pottered about with the bread and cheese and salmon, a smile widened his round face.

The artist looked up from the brushes he was cleaning at the door. "You look as happy as if you 'd had a fortune left you," he said.

"Well, I 'm considabul contented. I gen'ally am, ain't I?" he added quickly.

"So-so," admitted the young man. "You 're shiftless, that 's what 's the matter with you."

Uncle William gave his long, low chuckle. "I guess I be," he said softly,

"I guess I be. But I do take a sight o' comfort."

The young man finished the brushes and brought them in, standing them up in a quart cup. "Dinner ready?" he asked.

"I reckon it is." Uncle William scowled at the lavish table. "'Pears to me there 's suthin' I 've forgot. Oh, pickles!" He said it triumphantly. "If you would n't mind takin' that plate, Mr. Woodworth, and goin' down cellar?"

"All right." The young man took the plate and disappeared down the ladder that served as a stairway to the tiny hole beneath.

Uncle William looked cautiously at the trap-door. Then he tiptoed to the window. He drew the glass from his pocket and pointed it at the harbor. The boat had come to anchor just off

the island. Uncle William fixed her with his glass. "Uh-huh, jest as I thought," he said softly.

A step sounded on the ladder and he shut the glass, thrusting in into his pocket and turning a bland, innocent face upon the room. "Does beat all how good pickles be with fish. Set 'em right there, Mr. Woodworth. Now we 're ready."

Uncle William's chair faced the window, and as he ate his eye dropped, now and then, to the bay below. Once it lighted with a swift gleam and he craned his neck a little.

"What is it?" asked the artist, half turning

"Nuthin'," said Uncle William, hastily, "nuthin'. 'T ain't wuth turnin' your head for. I 'm al'ays seein' things. Get up in the night, like enough, and wander round the island,

jest to see 'em. Go all over the island some nights. You see a good deal that way—fust and last: little critturs runnin' round, softlike, and the moon and stars—" Uncle William was talking against time. His eye had lost interest in the bay. It seemed to be fixed on the moon and stars. One ear was turned expectantly toward the door.

The artist watched him with an amused smile. He never interrupted one of Uncle William's monologues.

"I 've spent a good deal of my life," went on Uncle William, "looking round at things."

The gravel crunched outside.

The artist started.

Uncle William turned a little. "Andy, like enough," he said. He rose and went leisurely toward the door.

The figure of a tall man stood in it, surveying the room.

Uncle William's smile broke into radiance. It crinkled his eyes and nose and mouth. "I said 't was you," he exclaimed. "I knew 't was you." He held out a big hand, and drew the man into the room, peering behind him. A little look of disappointment came over his face. "You all alone?" he demanded.

"I am at present," said the man, smiling. I left a friend on the beach below. I was n't sure how I should find you." His courteous glance took in the young man.

Uncle William turned quickly. "It 's Mr. Curie," he said, "the one that bought your picters. And he 's left somebody—a friend—down below. Mebbe you would n't mind stepping down and fetchin' 'em up."

"Of course." The young man rose, holding out a hand. "I 'm glad to meet

you, sir. I shall be back in a minute. I 'll bring him right up." His step rang quick on the rock outside.

The two old men looked at each other.

Uncle William's face wore its roundest smile. "I would n't be s'prised if he stayed quite a spell." He brought a chair and planted it in front of the stranger. "Set down."

The man sat down, looking around the room. "It is good to be here," he said.

Uncle William, with a hand on either knee, surveyed him over his spectacles. "I saw 't was you 'fore you landed."

The man's face fell a little. "We wanted to surprise you—"

"You 've s'prised *him* all right. He hain't no idea what he 's runnin' to." He looked toward the door. "I reckon he 'll stay an hour."

The man crossed one thin leg over

another. "That gives me more time," he said contentedly.

Uncle William gazed politely. "Was you wantin' time?" he asked.

The man smiled. "I wanted to see you."

"You wanted to see *me?*" Uncle William's face held pleasure, but not very much curiosity.

The man nodded. "I came on purpose."

"You did? I thought you come to bring her?" His thumb indicated the beach.

"I wanted to see you, and she wanted to come, so here we are."

"Here you be," assented Uncle William. "And I 'm glad to see ye. He was gettin' middlin' hard to hold."

The other man studied his face. "How much will you take for your place?" he asked.

Uncle William looked up. He shook his head slowly. "I won't take nuthin'."

The man smiled. "I 'll give you five thousand for it."

"You will?" Uncle William's glance was mild. A smile crept into it. "I wish 't Andy could hear you say that," he said; "but I can't sell."

"Why not?"

"Where 'd I live?"

The stranger appeared to ponder a minute. "You could keep enough to live on," he said at last. "I 'd rather have you, in fact."

"I 'll give *you* enough to live on," said Uncle William. "I like your looks. I 'd like to have you round."

"That won't do for me," said the man.

"'T won't do for me, either," said Uncle William.

They confronted each other. The stranger's eyes dropped first. "I 'll give you ten thousand," he said quietly.

"You will?" Uncle William moistened his lips with his tongue. "I 'll *hev* to go tell Andy that," he said.

"You 'll take it?"

"Lord, no, I could n't take it! Nor twenty thousand; so don't you go offerin' it to me. I *should* like to tell Andy you was offerin' it, though."

The man laughed out. "I was thinking of it," he said.

Uncle William leaned forward, looking at him. "What are you so set on buyin' my place for? It 's a God-forsaken spot—most folks would call it. Andy does."

"I like it," said the man.

"So do I," said Uncle William.

The Frenchman waited a minute. Then he turned a little, looking into

Uncle William's face. "Did you ever see me before?" he asked slowly.

Uncle William returned the look in full measure. "You ain't forgot I saw you in New York—'long in the spring?"

"I don't mean that. I mean before —years ago." The man's voice was mellow.

Uncle William studied the thin face and looked over the thin legs. "No, I hain't ever seen ye," he said. "And yet there 's suthin' about ye,"—the man uncrossed his legs,—"'suthin' that keeps kind o' pullin' on me." Uncle William rubbed the back of his head thoughtfully. "You ever seen me?" he demanded.

The man's eyes laughed. "Hundreds of times."

"You hev?" Uncle William sat up. "Where?"

"Right here."

"In this house?"

"Well, around here," said the man, "on these rocks and near by. I lived here once. I love in these rocks—every one." He waved a hand at the landscape.

Uncle William fixed him with stern eye. "You hain't ever lived here," he said slowly. "You don't mean to lie." His gaze grew kindlier. "You 're jest romancin'." He brought it out with unction.

The Frenchman stared. Then he laughed out. "Well done! I can't fight you for that." He leaned forward. "Who lived this side of Gunnion's when you were a boy?" he asked.

Uncle William paused. He looked again at the face with its lifted eyebrows and pointed beard. He shook his head. A light grew in his face slowly—he started forward. "Not Bo-

det?" he said eagerly. "Not little Benjy Bodet?" He stared again.

The man laughed musically. "Right." He stood up, holding out his hand. "I thought you would know me."

Uncle William took it slowly. He studied the thin, keen face. "Benjy Bodet," he said. "I 'd know you—much as you 've changed—I 'd know you! Set right down and tell me all about it."

"All?" said the man. He laughed again, looking contentedly about the room. "It will take some time."

"You 'll have to stay quite a while," said Uncle William.

The man nodded. "I mean to. I 've wanted to come back ever since the day we sailed for France."

"You was twelve year old that summer," said Uncle William. "Your

folks come into property, did n't they, over there?"

"Yes—on my mother's side. We took her name. I was sick for months after we got there—homesick, cooped up in rooms."

"You poor little chap!" Uncle William surveyed him. Affection was in his eyes, and memory. "You was al'ays a kind o' peaked little thing," he said reflectively. "You hain't changed much—when you come to look. Take off your whiskers and slick up your hair and fetch down your eyebrows a little —jest about the same."

The man laughed out. He swung his eyeglasses boyishly from their chain. "Well, you 're not."

"Me?" Uncle William looked down at his bulk. "More of me—bigger a little, sort o', mebbe."

The man nodded. "But just the same underneath."

"Jest the same," said Uncle William.

The man drew a deep breath. "I 've traveled all over the world. There 's no place like this anywhere."

"Nowheres," said Uncle William, fervently.

"I shall spend my days here."

"Right here," assented Uncle William.

The man looked at him keenly. "Will you sell?"

Uncle William shook his head. "I 'll divide."

The man held out his hand. "It 's a bargain."

Uncle William took it and held it fast. His eyes twinkled. "I *must* go and tell Andy," he said. "He 'll be reel pleased."

"Andy?" The man's face lighted. "You don't mean Andy Halloran? Is he here yet?"

"Right on deck: just sit down the rock here this minute," said Uncle William.

The man's eyes twinkled. "Remember the day he took my lobster-pot?"

"Borrowed it," said Uncle William, dryly.

"Borrowed it," asserted the man. He chuckled a little. "He got his pay."

Uncle William nodded. "He al'ays does. Andy 's borrowin' lobster-pots now—same Andy—gets his pay every time. He 's great on gettin' his pay, Andy is."

"He ought to have made a mean man," said the other, thoughtfully.

"Well, he hain't, not so to speak," said Uncle William, slowly. "There 's mean spots—rocks; you have to steer some, but it 's sandy bottom if you know how to make it. I 've anchored on him a good many year now and I never

knew him to slip anchor. It may drift a little now and then. Any bottom will drift."

The man laughed out. "So it will." He took up his hat. "I must go and look up a place to stay," he said.

Uncle William looked at him sternly. "Not a step. You don't stir a step, Benjy Bodet." He pointed to the red lounge.

The Frenchman paused, irresolute. "I 'm going to stay some time, you know." He glanced about the little room. "I shall be in the way."

"You set right down," said Uncle William.

The man looked at him with raised brows. "You want me?"

"Want you? Why should n't I want you!" roared Uncle William. "I 've been waitin' for you sixty year and odd. Set down!"

The Frenchman sat down on the red lounge and crossed his legs.

A ball of gray fur descended upon them and fluffed itself, purring.

He peered at it uncertainly. He swung the glasses to place upon his nose, surveying it.

"Now, don't that show?" demanded Uncle William. "She don't take to strangers—never. Look at her." She was kneading her paws in the thin knees, delicately, with treading softness.

The Frenchman's eyes lighted. "She 's your cat?"

"She is," said Uncle William, "and she knows a lot. If she says you 're goin' to stay, you 're goin' to. You won't leave here, not till you 've built over there on the old cellar place." He waved his hand toward the horizon. "I 'll help ye build," he exclaimed.

"They ain't nuthin' I like better 'n potterin' around and tellin' folks what to do. I can't fish till the *Jennie* 's done, and I 'll turn to and help. The' 's a girl I can get to do the work. She 's a good cook, and she 'll come down and do for us—be glad to." He rubbed his hands, beaming upon his guest.

The Frenchman stroked the gray fur with slow touch. "I might take the young man's place," he said thoughtfully.

Uncle William paused. "Lord! I 'd clean forgot—I feel about twelve year old," he added apologetically. "But don't you worry. This house 'll stretch. We three 'll get along all right in it."

"And Sergia?" said the man, with a smile.

Uncle William rubbed his head. "Um—I 'd forgot *her*, too."

The man laughed out. "You don't need to worry. I 'm going to lend them my yacht for a trip."

"Both on 'em?" asked Uncle William. His puzzled face gazed at the man.

"Yes."

Uncle William stared. Then the light dawned. "Right off?" he demanded.

"Right off," said the man. "And when they come back, the house will be ready for them."

Uncle William glowed. "They goin' to live with you?"

"I hope so."

"Well, well!" He rubbed his great knees thoughtfully with either hand. "I would n't ever 'a' thought o' that. And the Lord himself could n't 'a' planned anything better 'n that."

"Thank you," said the man, smiling.

"Jest the right thing," went on

Uncle William. "And byme-by there 'll be little toddlers—gettin' over the rocks between here and there."

"Yes."

"And settin' by the fire, warmin' their toes and eatin' tarts jest the way we used to."

"Just the same," said the man.

Uncle William mused thoughtfully. The light of flitting memories was in his face.

The man on the lounge watched him through the high-perched glasses. Presently he took off the glasses and rubbed them on his handkerchief. Then he blew his nose.

Uncle William looked up. The smile on his face was beautiful and tender and full of light. "Where be they?" he said.

XXV

HEY were standing by a great rock at the foot of the cliff. The afternoon had slipped away and the harbor was full of changing light, but the artist's back was turned to it. He was looking into two little round mirrors of light. Perhaps he saw the harbor reflected there. He saw everything else —the whole round world, swinging in space, and life and death. He bent closer to them. "Why did n't you write?" reproachfully.

"Uncle William would n't let me."

"Uncle William!"

She nodded. "He told me not to write. He said you would get well

faster if you had something to bother you." The demure face was full of glinting lights. "He seemed to think that is what we are made for—mostly. He 's an old dear!" she added.

"He is!" He had gained possession of the quick-moving hand. "I shall keep you now that I have you—"

"Yes."

"—for that very purpose!"

She smiled quietly. "I 'll try to live up to it. You took the prize, you know."

He caged the other hand. "Bother the prize! There 's only one thing I want."

Her lip trembled a little.

He watched it jealously. He bent and touched the trembling line. The world was blotted out—sun and bay and wheeling sky. A new world was born —of two souls and swift desire. The

heart of the universe opened to them. When they drew apart, her eyes were lighted with tears. He wiped them away slowly, holding the prisoned hands. "We will not wait," he whispered.

"No," half breathed.

"In a week?" insistently.

"Yes."

"To-morrow?" imperiously.

The laughter had come back to her eyes. "To-day!" She freed her hands. "Come."

He was searching her face. "You mean it?"

"Why not? They will be glad to get rid of us." She lifted a laughing gesture to the cliff.

"They?"

"William and Benjamin." She said the names with slow pleasure, smiling at his puzzled face. "It all came out

when I told him that I knew you and that Uncle William lived here. He saw in a flash—everything! We started next day."

He had put an arm about her, guardingly. "We 'll go hunt up a priest," he said.

"Now?"

"At once!" decisively. "Uncle William might think I needed more discipline."

"You 're looking very well." She was gazing at him with fond eyes.

"I *am* well." He stretched out his arms. "I could conquer the world."

"We 'll sail round it." She nodded to the boat that was anchored off the island. "She is ours—for as long as we want her."

He stared at the boat and raised a glance to the cliff. "And what will *he* do?"

"M. Curie? He builds for himself a house, for himself—and for us." She half chanted the words in sheer delight.

"A house—here—for himself—and for us!" His glance took in the bare, stern grandeur. "It will be very near heaven."

"Very near. Come, let us go." They climbed the steep path, with many pauses to look back on the gleaming bay and the boat riding at anchor—the boat that was to carry them away to the ends of the earth.

"We will go to St. Petersburg," said Sergia, watching the shining light.

"And Italy."

"Italy—and Spain."

"And build castles there."

"Castles! And then we will come home at last—"

"Home!" He said the word under his breath. They had come close to the

little house. Through the open door they saw the red room,—half in shadow, half in light,—and in the red room the two old men looking at each other.

Uncle William saw them first and got to his feet, his big face filled with welcome. "Come in, my dear." He took the girl's face between his hands, looking down into it with gentle delight. "We 're glad you 've come," he said slowly. "It was jest about time." He studied the face. "We want you to feel to home," he went on. "'Most everybody does feel to home, that comes here." He bent and kissed the face with rough tenderness.

Juno, from her perch, jumped down and rubbed a sidewise welcome along the gray skirt.

The girl stooped to stroke her. When she looked up, her eyes were filled with tears. She brushed them hastily aside.

Uncle William, from his height, looked down on them benignly. "You need n't mind those, my dear. Good salt water never hurt anybody yet—on sea or land. You do it all you want to."

The girl laughed out. And the music of her laugh filled the room. The twilight was lighted with it. Down below the tide came in slowly, lapping the stones. Across the harbor a single star shone out.

Uncle William glanced across to it. "Time to light up," he said. He took down the lantern from its place and lighted it with clumsy, careful fingers, setting it in the window. Then he surveyed the little room and his guests, a look of affection in his big face. "Must be 'most time for supper," he said.

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